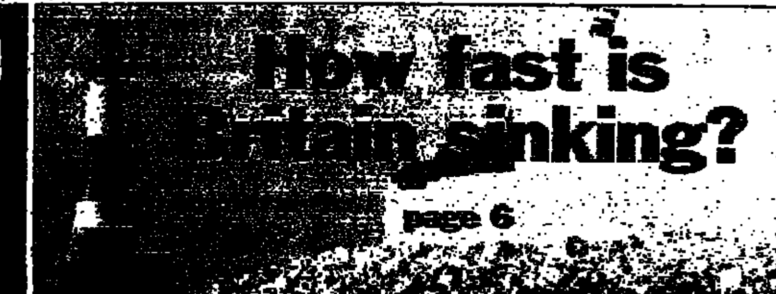
THE TIMES

No. 66,409 WEDNESDAY JANUARY 13 1999 http://www.the-times.co.uk



Good girl makes bad

page 34



How fast is Britain sinking?

page 6

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No cash for those who refuse jobs

'Workfare' testing for state benefits

By Jill Sherman, Chief Political Correspondent

ALL benefit claimants, including the disabled and lone parents, will be denied any State help unless they attend job interviews under radical reforms to be announced by the Government today.

All claimants of working age, except the disabled and lone parents, will then have to take up a job offer or face losing their entire benefit under proposals that take Britain a step closer to the American Workfare system.

David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, and Alistair Darling, the Social Security Secretary, will today announce an £80 million programme to test the scheme in 12 pilot studies across the country. Four of the trials will be run by private firms to assess potential administrative savings.

The pilots will be voluntary, covering about 450,000 people over three years, but the Welfare Reform Bill, announced in The Queen's Speech, will include measures to allow the Government to set up a nationwide compulsory scheme within a year.

All potential claimants who attend interviews will have their own personal adviser under the "single gateway" scheme who will assess their entitlement to the whole range of benefits including housing benefit, income support and disability benefits.

Ministers, bracing themselves for an internal party backlash, have until now been cautious about the extent of benefit penalties. But yesterday Whitehall sources disclosed that no payments would be made unless people turned up for a job interview.

The twin aim is to reduce dependency on the State for all those capable of work and to cut down on benefit fraud.

"Work for those who can and security for those who cannot," said one education source last night. "The interview will be a pre-condition for getting benefit."

The source denied that the Government was considering compelling the disabled and lone parents to take up jobs but suggested that the proposals could be extended to require these people to attend repeat interviews.

The Prime Minister is believed to be anticipating a backlash against Mr Darling's proposals to restrict disability benefits, including more rigorous medical tests for those claiming incapacity benefit, and curbs on widows' benefits, which are also contained in the Bill.

In addition the Social Security Department angered the Royal British Legion yesterday by announcing that it would not repeal Conservative cutbacks to payments given to deaf servicemen, although Labour had attacked this in Opposition. A spokeswoman said that the Government was following medical advice, after an 18 month review, that deterioration of hearing when people got older could not be attributed to injury suffered in service.

The extra £80 million announced by the Government for the single gateway scheme will be spent on recruiting and training personal advisers.

Four pilots will start in April in Essex, Warwickshire, Clyde Coast and Renfrew, and Lea Roding — covering East London. The remainder will be set up from next November. The privately managed pilots will cover Suffolk, Leeds, North Cheshire and North Nottinghamshire, and four other Government trials will run in Somerset, Gwent Borders, Calderdale and Kirklees and Buckinghamshire.

Education officials stressed that there would be exemptions for the recently bereaved and those who are severely disabled and cannot turn up for an interview.

Whitehall sources said the argument for compelling people to attend interviews followed evidence that voluntary pilots had failed to attract claimants.

"Once people do turn up for an interview, however, many of them go on to get a job," said one source.

Leading article, page 19



VALERIE O'SULLIVAN

Sarah Flannery, 16, who baffled the judges with her grasp of cryptography. They described her work as "brilliant"

Teenager cracks e-mail code

By Audrey Magee, Ireland Correspondent

AN Irish schoolgirl was yesterday hailed as a mathematical genius after devising a code for sending secret messages by computer.

Sarah Flannery used the science of cryptography to design a code that is ten times faster than the one currently used to convert confidential information so that it can be sent via the Internet and e-mail. She has been inundated with offers of jobs and scholarships from international computer companies and universities.

Miss Flannery, 16, from Blarney, Co Cork, used matrices to formulate an alternative to RSA, the current data protection code, devised by three students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1977. The result is an algorithm, a mathematical blueprint, that is far faster than the RSA and equally secure.

Miss Flannery, whose father, David, lectures in mathematics at Cork Institute of Technology, devised her code to enter the Irish Young Scientists and Technology Exhibition. She won at the weekend and left the judges unable fully to comprehend her project. They described her work as "brilliant" and one judge advised her to patent it.

Miss Flannery said she was thrilled. "I had to go through lots of stuff before I finalised the theory," she said. "I reached critical points where I would get stuck for three weeks or so. I just kept thinking about it and then the whole thing slipped into place." The oldest of five children, she earned eight As in her junior certificate, the Irish equivalent of GCSEs, with extra tuition from her father.

Miss Flannery is now deciding what to do with her new code, the Cayley-Purser, named after Arthur Cayley, an eminent 19th-century Cambridge mathematician, and Michael Purser, a cryptographer who inspired her. She is considering publishing her findings rather than patenting as she does not want people to pay for her discovery.

She will represent Ireland at the EU Science Contest in Greece in September.

Freetown burns as rebels slaughter hundreds

From Sam Kiley in Freetown

HUNDREDS of Ukrainian mercenaries are fighting alongside Sierra Leone's rebels who yesterday made good on their promise to burn Freetown, the capital, to the ground and torched the power station, post office, town hall and United Nations headquarters.

West African peacekeepers continued to try to drive the rebels from the centre of the city, and claimed that they were conducting "mopping up operations". But yesterday afternoon, the city was in flames.

Huge columns of smoke billowed as the last of the once elegant Creole architecture of the freed slave colony were set alight, along with colonial-era government buildings.

Hundreds of bodies, many of them victims of summary execution by the rebels led by Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie, lay rotting in the streets while the the Red Cross struggled to get medical supplies in.

"The situation is extremely dangerous. It changes from one moment to another, and the rebels have totally changed. This time around they are using clever infiltration techniques," said a resident of Freetown desperately waiting for a helicopter to evacuate him from the western fringes which are under control of Nigerian-led forces.

The Ukrainians have not yet been seen in Freetown. But sources independent of the Ecomog (West African) soldier said about 300 Ukrainians were spotted in Makeni, 100 miles from the capital which fell to the rebels two weeks ago, and they were camouflaged with black cream.

'Secret link', page 14

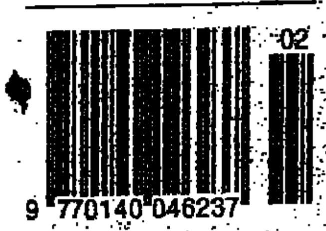
New sentences for burglars

Jack Straw brought in the Tories' plans for automatic minimum sentences for three-time burglars. They mean a burglar could be in jail for just 16 months with automatic remission and early release on curfew..........Page 2

Trade war threat

A global trade war came closer when America failed to resolve a dispute with Europe over banana imports and threatened sanctions on Japan over steel..........Page 23

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Marathon hero Jim Peters dies

Jim Peters, the British runner who collapsed in the 1954 Empire Games marathon in Vancouver, has died aged 80. As he started the final lap he led by more than three miles, but despite a valiant struggle, he never crossed the finishing line..........Pages 21, 44

Yemeni kidnap leader 'faces death penalty'

By Daniel McGrory in Aden and Stephen Farrell

THE leader of the Islamic kidnap gang which abducted 16 Western tourists in a desert ambush is to go on trial for his life today in a high-security Yemeni court.

The bereaved families of three Britons killed during a shootout with security forces are likely to be asked if they wish to spare Abu Hassan's life.

As the surviving hostages gather for the cremation of one of the victims, Margaret Whitehouse, 52, Mr Hassan is also being accused of training and arming five Britons being held for allegedly plotting to bomb an international hotel and the British Consulate.

The Yemenis claim that four days after the Britons were arrested in police raids, Mr Hassan, 28, ambushed the tour party to barter for the release of those jailed in Aden.

The lawyer for the five Britons, Salim Basunaid, said last night: "My fear is that Abu Hassan's trial will incriminate my clients and yet they still have not been charged let alone had a chance to explain why they were in Aden."

Mr Basunaid has still not been allowed to see the five but has been handed police files which claim the men confessed to meeting Mr Hassan at his terrorist camp where they were given TNT explosives and weapons. The lawyer insists these confessions were made under torture.

Scotland Yard is still investigating claims the five were sent on their bombing mission by the London-based Muslim cleric, Abu Hamza, whose extremist Supporters of Shariah group runs a website depicting a hand grenade and advertising military training courses.

The Yard has joined forces with the FBI to explore suggested links between SOS and the wanted terrorist billionaire, Osama bin Laden. Security sources claim that Bin Laden, who is hiding in Afghanistan, has helped fund the London-based SOS. They also believe four of those being held in the Central Security Headquarters in Aden are personally linked to the cleric, including Mohsen Ghailan, who allegedly confessed to receiving $2,000 (£1,200) from SOS to take part in this operation.

Legal sources in Yemen said Mr Hassan and two others captured in the bungled rescue are certain to face the death penalty if found guilty which, under a new law, is mandatory for kidnapping.

Last night Mr Whitehouse, 54, from Hook, Hampshire, was unable to discuss whether he would call for the death penalty or "blood money" to pardon Mr Hassan.

Mosque inquiry, page 5

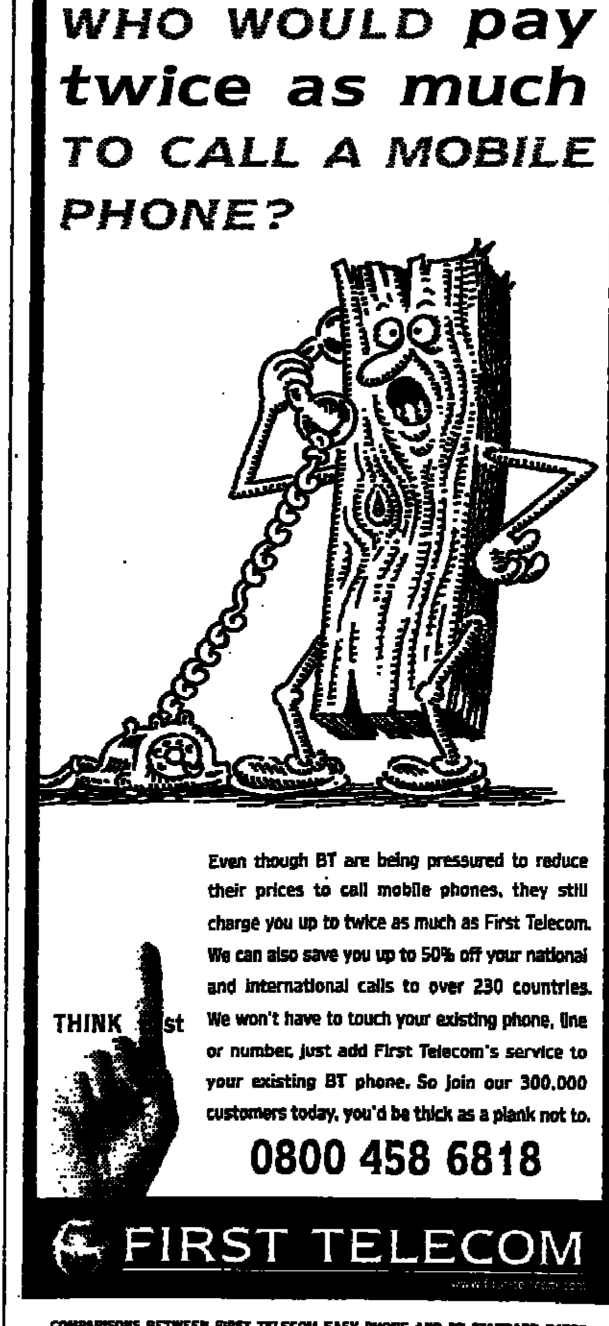


"It could have been worse — we might have ended up in Ashworth"

Reprieve for Ashworth

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, decided to keep Ashworth Special Hospital in Merseyside open despite a damning public inquiry report on the hospital at the centre of a paedophilia and pornography scandal.

Inquiry members and mental health groups immediately criticised the move. The charity Mind felt he had ducked a "brave challenge"..........Page 2



Software stops pupils seeing Net porn

By John O'Leary, Education Editor

SCHOOLS are to be offered a powerful screening system developed by American space scientists which blocks pupils' access to Internet pornography even in otherwise innocent documents and e-mail messages.

The software, being launched today at an educational technology exhibition, is used widely in the United States, where it spared teachers the embarrassment of answering questions on the more salacious sections of the Starr Report on President Clinton. While most school filtering devices allowed pupils access to the full report, published on recognised sites such as that of the White House, those using URLabs' I-Gear package found descriptions of his sexual encounters censored.

ICL, the British computer company, will launch a new version of the package, which includes e-mail screening, at Olympia in London this morning. It is already in use in some Scottish schools and will be installed in all Hertfordshire state schools this spring.

Tony Blair wants all 32,000 British schools to be connected to the World Wide Web by 2002, and the Government is pouring millions into the development of a National Grid for Learning. But concerns about Internet pornography and undesirable e-mail traffic have dissuaded many schools from making use of the technology.

Most British schools use filters to block access to sites known to contain unsuitable material. The software will enable them to set their own censorship criteria.

Dan Sydow, who developed the software after more than ten years' working for the Nasa space agency, said: "The programme is particularly powerful because it looks at the context as well as the words used. The inclusion of e-mail is important because schools have intercepted everything from bomb-making instructions to messages from stalkers."

Mr Sydow added: "Sexually explicit or violent material is what most schools are concerned about, but some users might want to block access to Internet shopping."

Internet filtering has become big business in America; it was worth more than $14 million (£8.5 million) in 1997. In Britain the new package will cost about £1,000 a school, but it is being bought mainly by local authorities.

TODAY ON PAGE 18

The opinion formers... Challenging minds in the changing Times



Alan Coren

'He's a strange cove, your Johnny Sun'



Simon Jenkins

'The key to this week's Blair relaunch is the lack of anything to say'



Bronwen Maddox

'Like him or not, the tangoing President is amazing'

TOMORROW



The Scotsman in the Times turns a sceptical eye to recieved wisdom

Magnus Linklater



Britain's leading economic visionary turns his gaze east and despairs

Anatole Kaletsky

Morose visage lets old Labour flavour flood out

MATTHEW PARRIS

POLITICAL SKETCH

This week John Prescott has the air of a cat who has swallowed a canary. To call him cheerful would overstate. Joy is not in the Deputy Prime Minister's repertoire: the facial muscles just aren't there. But his is the merriest scowl in Westminster.

When he's at the dispatch box the Government's whole nature seems to change. New Labour terminology vanishes like a morning mist. Nobody speaks of "the Project". Nobody's nice about Liberal Democrats. The world of old Labour comes flooding back like daylight after the strobes and fluorescence of a 1990s purple dream. Mr Prescott was flanked by his favourite ministers. Michael Meacher: an earnest, intense, kindly leftwinger; Glenda Jackson, an austere socialist, straight and harsh; and Alan Meale, real-ale old Labour from the Nottinghamshire coalfields. Between them these three have carried Labour's Commons banner for some 40 years. Their constituencies — Oldham, Hampstead & Highgate, and Mansfield — could form the cultural tripod on which old Labour once stood.

When Prescott's taking Questions even the faces behind seem to change. So few seem to be on-message for the Project. Does Prescott draw a different audience — or is our eye drawn to a usually camouflaged gang? Surprising how many of them there are. I looked along the Government backbenches yesterday during Questions on Environment, Transport and the Regions (Prescott's domain). Where were these new Labour groupies about whom we all write?

There was Dennis Skinner (66) in his usual place — the Beast of Bolsover — flanked by Terry Lewis (63) — the Beast of Worsley, and Ronnie Campbell (55), the rowdy Geordie former Scargillite. No thirtysomething modernisers these. Beside them, John Cryer is thirtysomething — and as fiery and hard-edged a Leftie as his late father. Another thirtysomething, leftwinger Maria Eagle, a few yards away, is entertainingly off-message.

There was Gordon Prentice (Pendle, 47) for the hardish Left, Peter Pike (Burnley, 61), ideology-free old Labour, Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley), a 61-year old campaigner and rebel in the radical cause, and David Winnick (Walsall N, 65), a long-time leftish libertarian. Bearded like an Old Testament prophet, Andrew Bennett (Denton & Reddish, 59) has led many a ramblers' protest. Another beard was Bill Michie's (Sheffield Heeley, 63), a veteran leftwinger who voted against the European Elections Bill.

Was Gwynneth Dunwoody (Crewe & Nantwich, 69), re-upholstered in orange and brown for 1999, new Labour? Mrs Dunwoody is of the brave, overlooked, old Labour Right. Is Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne, 75), former minister and planner, new Labour? All were there.

And alongside, the dispossessed. Some quite young, like Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh S), whose Brownite allegiance when a minister was not enough to save him from Blair's axe; some surely bitter, like former Public Service Minister David Clarke (S Shields, 59), whose Freedom of Information Bill has just suffered another amputation. With every reshuffle the numbers who have lost hope, or gained a grievance, grow.

Labour has a huge majority. Within Labour, however, new Labour does not; and old Labour is bigger than Mr Blair's majority. Those from whom these examples are taken do not hang together as a gang: they are unrelated dots; they do not comprise a picture. But they could. With John Prescott setting the tone yesterday — Gestalt! It was momentarily possible to join up the dots. There are hundreds of them.

Junior minister Hilary Armstrong muddled her words yesterday, turning 'capping criteria' into 'crapping criteria' and narrowly avoiding disaster with 'crude and universal capping'. Prescott almost grinned. Something's cheered him up.

Dobson rejects call to close Ashworth

BY MARK HENDERSON AND RUSSELL JENKINS

THE Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, yesterday reprieved the secure hospital at the centre of a paedophilia and pornography scandal, despite the findings of a public inquiry.

The decision to keep Ashworth Special Hospital in Merseyside open despite strong recommendations to close it brought immediate criticism from inquiry members and mental health groups.

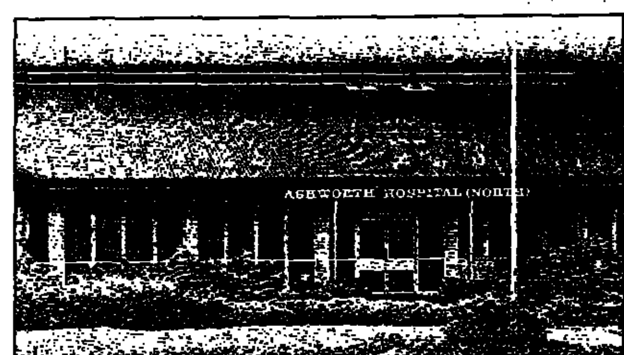
Professor Brian Edwards, a panellist, said: "The panel quite frankly disapprove of the decision." Michael Howlett of the Zito Trust said it was "deeply disappointing".

Peter Fallon QC, the inquiry chair, said Mr Dobson would have only himself to blame if there were further scandals at the hospital.

"If they don't do something about the shape and nature of Ashworth they will certainly in our judgment have missed the boat," he said.

If they keep to the structure as it is currently the problems will return."

The inquiry's 473-page report, published yesterday, found evidence that pornography was freely available in Ashworth's Personality Disorder Unit, and that convicted sex offenders were allowed to play unsupervised with a girl aged eight who was being "groomed for paedophile purposes". It advised Mr Dobson to shut down the "dysfunctional" hospital "at the earliest opportunity" as it could not "flourish under any management", and called for a network of small regional secure units to replace Ashworth and the other special hospitals at Rampton in Nottinghamshire and Broadmoor in Berkshire.



Pornography was available in a unit at Ashworth

Mr Dobson accepted that there had been a "catalogue of disasters" at Ashworth but insisted it must remain open.

"The three special hospitals must continue to be the main providers of high security services," he said. "I do not believe the problem at Ashworth is in the bricks and mortar. The problem is management and that is what we are determined to tackle."

Ashworth would make a "fresh start" with improved security costing £1.5 million and fewer perks for patients, he said. Visits by children will be banned in all but special cases.

Peter Clarke, Ashworth's acting chief executive, said the hospital had already confiscated computers, banned cash and stopped child visits.

The inquiry was set up in 1997 after serious allegations were made by Stephen Daggett, a convicted sex offender who absconded to blow the whistle on failings at Ashworth. His claims that pornography, alcohol and drugs were freely available and that patients might be abusing visiting children were found to be "largely accurate".

Attitudes to security was "farcical", and managers at Ashworth and the Special Hospital Service Adminstration repeatedly ignored, covered up or failed to prevent incompetence and failings.

Paul Lever, chairman of Ashworth Hospital Authority, and Anne-Marie Nelson, chairman of the SHSA, were urged to resign and both stepped down yesterday. A further four unnamed members of staff may be sacked in light of the report, Mr Clarke said.

Eight other managers and staff who had already resigned, retired or been sacked were criticised in similar terms, including the former chief executive of Ashworth, Janice Miles.

Charles Kaye, former chief executive of the SHSA, Pamela Taylor, former head of medical services at the SHSA, Colin Dale, former Executive Nurse Director, and Mark Stowell-Smith, a senior social worker blamed for the child's unsupervised visits, were also held accountable.

Virginia Bottomley, the Health Secretary over the period considered, is also reproached for introducing liberal reforms in special hospitals too hastily in response to the 1993 Blom-Cooper report.

The inquiry's 58 recommendations also included a proposal to treat offenders with untreatable personality disorders as common criminals and imprisoned rather than held with the mentally ill.

It called for "reviewable sentences" for such criminals, under which prisoners due for release would have to prove they no longer posed a danger to the public. They should be held in special units.

The Fallon report revealed a security regime in Ashworth's Personality Disorder Unit so lax that it became "a place where normal rules did not apply". Convicted sex offenders were allowed easy access to pornography.



Peter Fallon, QC, who said action must be taken

Whistle blower now feels vindicated

THE Ashworth patient who revealed the astonishing events at its Personality Disorder Unit, yesterday spoke of his "vindication" by the Fallon report (Mark Henderson writes).

Stephen Daggett, 38, has been held at Rampton since he absconded from Ashworth on a supervised shopping trip in 1996. He eventually gave himself up to police after travelling to Belgium, and told them he had run away to draw attention to appalling lapses at the hospital.

He wrote a document entitled "My Concerns", spelling out allegations of paedophilia, pornography, security failures and drug abuse that has been accepted almost in its entirety by the Fallon inquiry. His claims were passed to ministers by his parents' MP Alice Mahon, leading Stephen Dorrell, the then Health Secretary Stephen Dorrell, to set up the inquiry.

He said: "Today does not make me happy but certainly I feel vindicated for doing what I did. I do not expect to be thanked for what I did.

"At first I was ridiculed because people simply could not get their head around what I was telling them. I only hope the authorities can now allow me to get on with my clinical agenda."

Daggett was convicted in 1986 of three indecent assaults against young girls.

Three years for repeat burglars

BY RICHARD FORD

BURGLARS given an automatic three-year jail term under sentencing proposals announced yesterday will serve just six months longer than the current average sentence for burglary.

With automatic remission and early release on curfew, a burglar given the three-year minimum could be in jail for just 16 months when the proposal becomes effective in 2001. The new sentence was announced in spite of opposition from the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham of Cornhill, and other senior judges who argue that automatic sentences fetter judicial discretion.

Jack Straw's decision to bring in the Conservative Government's plan for automatic minimum sentences for three-time domestic burglars was so sudden that the Prison Service only knew about it last week. Officials from the Home Office contacted the service towards the end of the week asking what the implications would be for the prison population.

The Home Secretary's adoption of his predecessor's proposal was seen by penal reform groups as a panic measure and part of the Government's attempted relaunch after the disarray over Christmas. Lord Hurd of Westwell, the chairman of the Prison Reform Trust and former Home Secretary, said he did not support the change: "I think this is strength through unity week. He has been told to find something tough."

But last night Mr Straw said that after figures in October showed a change in the projected prison population he had asked for work to be put in hand for implementing the sentences. He said: "The decision had been taken in my head well before Christmas."

At present the average sentence for a third-time burglar is approximately two years, meaning they are out after 12 months.

Blair denies editor worked for MI6

BY A CORRESPONDENT

DOMINIC LAWSON, the editor of *The Sunday Telegraph* who has rejected claims that he might be an MI6 agent, has never been employed by the Government, the Prime Minister said yesterday.

Mr Blair also dismissed suggestions that Mr Lawson had been paid by the Government or "anyone acting on its behalf" into a bank or banks.

The denials follow Labour MP Brian Sedgemore's use of parliamentary privilege in the Commons last month to name Mr Lawson as the subject of allegations by former spy Richard Tomlinson. Mr Tomlinson had claimed in earlier newspaper reports that MI6 had recruited a senior Fleet Street figure.

Mr Lawson issued a brief statement at the time stressing: "I am not and never have been an agent, either paid or unpaid, of MI6 or any other Government agency."

But in parliamentary questions tabled today, Labour backbencher George Galloway asked Mr Blair: "If you will list the capacities in which Mr Lawson has been employed by the Government or any agency acting on its behalf."

He also asked: "What public funds have been paid by the Government or anyone acting on its behalf into a bank or banks to Mr Lawson."

Mr Blair's tabled reply was simple. "None," he said.

During pre-Christmas debates in the Commons last month, Mr Sedgemore named Mr Lawson. "I would hope we would have some time between now and Christmas to look at the claim that Dominic Lawson has been recruited as a paid MI6 agent," he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Lawrence charges

A police officer in the Stephen Lawrence inquiry is to face seven charges of neglect of duty after the bungled hunt for the killers of the black student, but four other senior officers have escaped similar serious charges because they have retired from the Metropolitan Police. The Police Complaints Authority recommended bringing the charges against Detective Inspector Ben Bullock, second in command of the investigation, after an inquiry into how the Metropolitan Police dealt with the case. The authority also criticised the lack of first aid treatment offered to Stephen, aged 18, as he lay dying after being stabbed in Eltham, southeast London. Mr Bullock will deny the charges.

Air crash inquiry

The British and Irish Governments are to re-open the case of the Aer Lingus aircraft that crashed off the Irish coast in 1968 with the loss of 61 lives. Relatives claim that the Viscount aircraft was shot down by a missile or a pilotless aircraft, and are campaigning for a full explanation. The British Government has repeatedly denied any involvement. However, experts from the Ministry of Defence and the Irish Department of Transport are to re-examine the files.

Viagra on NHS threat

Doctors have warned the Government they will start prescribing Viagra on the NHS within the next ten days unless they get clear advice about when it can be used. The British Medical Association's GPs committee meets on January 21 and John Chisholm, the chairman, said yesterday that members would then advise doctors to defy the current ban on prescribing the drug if they had not been given guidelines on its use by that time.

TV licence review

The future of the television licence fee is to be reviewed by a task force chaired by Gavyn Davies, the chief international economist for Goldman Sachs. Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, said the panel would look into proposals to offer concessionary licence fees and to allow the BBC to raise more revenue from commercial activity. His department denied reports that old age pensioners would be given free television licences financed by a 10p levy on video rentals.

Police suspend worker

A civilian police worker has been suspended after giving a handgun, 150 live bullets and a bag of drugs to a member of the public. The items had been seized during a raid in Tyneside last week in which one man was arrested. They were being held as potential evidence but when a man walked into South Shields police station and said that he had come to collect them, the worker handed them over. An internal investigation has been launched.

Advert criticised

The Times has been criticised by the Advertising Standards Authority for using an advertisement which featured a picture of a woman in a bikini tied to a wooden cross. The advertisement, for a six part photographic series in *The Sunday Times Magazine* on the work of photographer Terry O'Neill, was the subject of 140 complaints from readers who protested that it was "tasteless, provocative and blasphemous to Christians."

Emotional plea by foster girls couple

Runaways send letter pleading 'Let us be a family,' reports Alex O'Connell

THE couple on the run with their foster daughters have written an emotional letter from an unknown address pleading to be allowed to adopt the girls.

In a letter sent to Anglia Television, Jeff and Jennifer Bramley urged police and social services to let them live as a family with the two girls.

The letter was handwritten in blue ink on lined paper and posted first class on Monday in Nottingham.

The couple left their home at Ramsey, Cambridgeshire, with Jade Bennett, 5, and her sister Hannah, 3, in September. The Bramleys, who have looked after the girls since March, fled in the belief that the children would be taken away from them by Cambridgeshire social services.

Mr Bramley, a Royal Mail worker in Peterborough, told his office he was not coming to work because he was ill.

The couple wrote: "We Jeff, Jenny, Jade and Hannah write this letter to tell the plight of a family that love each other and wishes to stay together.

"Jade and Hannah were told about us and told we would be their forever Mummy and Daddy, after we had met the girls several times in their foster home, they came to live with us. They soon grew to love us as their Mummy and Daddy, as we grew to love them as our daughters. Jade and Hannah were looking forward to their new lives with us."

The couple, who plead for understanding, write: "We are two good, honest, caring people who are willing to give up our home, our family and friends and jobs to maintain Jade and Hannah's happiness in keeping them with the parents they love and desperately want to share their lives with.

"We want the voices of our children to be heard. We were approved to be Jade and Hannah's new Mummy and Daddy, they were placed with us for us to adopt. It is misleading to call us foster parents.

"Social services seemed pleased with us and told us everything was fine until one day they said we were too safety conscious by saying 'no' and 'don't' too often.

"The children have been told by Social Services that they are to move on to another forever Mummy and Daddy."

In the letter the Bramleys say how Jade, who liked dancing, was very much looking forward to going to school. Hannah, the couple write, has enjoyed sessions at playgroup and was looking forward to going regularly.

"Jade and Hannah have cried, saying they love us and don't want to live with anyone else and that if anyone comes to take them away they will hold on to us, not letting go."

The letter concludes: "Jade and Hannah are two bright, intelligent, articulate children who love us with all their hearts. We ask therefore, will someone help us to be legally their Mummy and Daddy forever, making the hopes and dreams of these two wonderful girls come true?"

The letter is unsigned.

Police, who held back five paragraphs of the full letter for their investigations, are taking the communication seriously because it contains information only the Bramleys would know. Copies of the letter were also sent to *The Express* newspaper and a local paper.

Although Cambridgeshire social services said that they did not think that the couple would harm the children, they were concerned because they believed the Bramleys were highly distressed.

The letter was sent as the hunt for the Bramleys intensified after a potential sighting of the couple on the North Yorkshire Railway between Pickering and Grosmont. A vicar told police of how he spotted a girl he thought was Jade Bennett screaming on the train.

The Rev Jack Cooper said at the time: "The children were a nuisance and disturbing passengers. The parents made no attempt to stop them."

The couple's car was found abandoned in York.



Jeff and Jenny Bramley with Jade, left, and Hannah



Jemima Khan, who sent the 397 tiles to her mother as a Christmas present

Imran says wife will fight 'fake' charge

By Claudia Joseph and Zahid Hussain

JEMIMA KHAN has been charged in Pakistan with illegally exporting hundreds of antique tiles after the confiscation of a Christmas gift to her mother by customs officers.

Mrs Khan, who has not been arrested and is currently in Britain, faces a six-month prison sentence and £60 fine if convicted.

Yesterday her husband, Imran Khan, the former cricketer, who formed Pakistan's Movement for Justice party, accused the Government of political victimisation. "The case is fake," said Mr Khan, 46.

"I will file a defamation case against the customs department, which has become a tool in the hands of the Government in victimising political opponents."

Mrs Khan, 24, daughter of the late Sir James Goldsmith, had sent the 397 tiles to her mother in December when they were intercepted by customs officials. She said that the shipment, which she had bought in a market in Islamabad, was lawful because she had a receipt stating that the tiles were less than 50 years old.

Customs officials said that they had referred the tiles to the local archaeological department which had declared that they were "of paramount archaeological interest and belonged to the Islamic era". They claim the tiles were originally stolen from an archaeological site.

Blackmailer 'bled banker of £500,000'

By Paul Wilkinson

A BLACKMAILER bled a shy, respected country bank manager of almost £500,000 over nearly 20 years through threats to tell his wife about the time he bought a set of pornographic videos, a court was told yesterday.

By the time Brian Crossling was arrested in July 1997, he had allegedly taken £449,500 from his victim. Over the years the manager, now aged nearly 70 and retired, had sold his luxury house for a smaller one, remortgaged that, cashed in his wife's investments and lied to friends to get money for Crossling, the court was told.

The manager, identified to Newcastle Crown Court yesterday only as Mr X, also handed over a £92,000 lump sum that he received when he took early retirement in the mid 1980s, and ran up a £42,000 overdraft. He even contemplated suicide to escape Crossling's incessant demands.

His secret eventually came out in June 1997, when he was arrested by detectives investigating claims that he was trying to defraud his friends. Under questioning, Mr X claimed that Crossling had goaded him by saying the money had been used to set up a company dealing in pornographic videos and to buy drugs.

Robert Woodcock, prosecuting, said that Crossling: "Lived alone in a house he owned himself. He had no other means of support. When police searched his house they found £73,000 in cash under the kitchen sink and he had also salted away in building society accounts £250,000. We say none of this was lawfully his." Crossling, 40, from Rodymoor, near Crook, Co Durham, denies blackmail.

Mr Woodcock, who described Mr X as a man thoroughly respected in his community, said: "It started in 1978 when Mr X answered an advert in a newspaper for pornographic videos. Mr X bought a couple of them but nothing happened until he decided to buy some more from the same source.

"He then met Mr Crossling. Crossling asked him for a loan of money, saying he was going to start a company selling porn videos to coach companies. Mr X was content to lend the money, but Crossling, detecting the ease which a virtual stranger had handed over cash, realised what an easy touch he was."

Mr Woodcock said that Mr X eventually turned to friends for help. One gave him £40,000 in 1994, £21,000 in 1995 and £10,000 in 1997. An elderly lady gave him four sums totalling £63,000 in 1997 after Mr X claimed he needed urgent medical treatment.

In court Mr X said: "The pressure began at the start when I bought the videos as I did not want him to tell my wife. I also didn't want him to tell my wife he was a big-time drug dealer and police informant in Blackpool. He would say 'Would you like me to tell your wife about this?' It was a term of blackmail."

Mr X said that he had borrowed more than £220,000 from friend and relatives. "Most of it was because of pressure from Mr Crossling. I would not have loaned him any otherwise," he said.

The trial continues.

20 stitches for nurse attacked with glass

By Helen Johnstone

A NURSE who needed more than 20 stitches after a patient attacked her with a broken mirror in a hospital ward has vowed to return to work. Roz Hanson, 30 and a nurse for seven years, said yesterday: "Things like this come with the job. I'll be back at work within a few days."

The mother of one was close to tears as she described how she thought she would die as the patient turned violent as she treated him for a minor cut to his arm on the casualty ward at Kings Mill Hospital, Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire.

"The attack has not changed my view of nursing. He was ill and I could have come across him at any time. I am a lot better now, but it was very frightening at the time.

"Occasionally we have episodes that occur, spontaneous outbursts that might cause concern, but generally I feel safe to come to work. It occurs with the job because of the nature of the patients we look after. It is difficult to predict situations."

The patient broke furniture and smashed a mirror before attacking Mrs Hanson with pieces of broken glass. He plunged a shard into her arm before stabbing her in the back as she tried to flee.

He was overpowered by a male nurse and a female colleague who held him until police arrived. Mrs Hanson was taken to the hospital's accident and emergency department where she needed 18 stitches to her back and five to her arm.

□A 29-year-old man was yesterday remanded in custody by Mansfield magistrates accused of causing Mrs Hanson grievous bodily harm.

Port admits liability for Milford Haven oil spill

By Simon de Bruxelles

A PORT authority yesterday admitted liability an oil spill that contaminated 120 miles of Welsh coast.

The oil tanker *Sea Empress* ran aground at the entrance to the Milford Haven estuary in west Wales while under the control of an inexperienced pilot three years ago.

More than 72,000 tonnes of crude oil leaked from the vessels' tanks, killing thousands of sea birds, seals and other marine creatures. Fishing and tourism in the region were also badly affected.

Milford Haven Port Authority, which employed the pilot, yesterday pleaded guilty to "causing polluting matter to enter controlled waters of Milford Haven and the south west Wales coast" at a hearing at Cardiff Crown Court. The penalty under the Water Resources Act is an unlimited fine.

The court was told that the clean-up operation cost £60 million and the final bill, including compensation for losses sustained by the fishing and tourism industries, is likely to exceed £100 million.

Michael Hill, QC, prosecuting, said that the *Sea Empress*, carrying 130,000 tonnes of North Sea crude to a refinery, was "significantly bigger physically than her deadweight tonnage would have indicated".

In March 1991 the port authority had dropped a requirement for two pilots to be on vessels below 150,000 tonnes. At 147,000 tonnes, the *Sea Empress* just escaped classification as a "Very Large Crude Carrier" and the authority considered John Pearn, a class two pilot, to be qualified to guide the *Sea Empress* into port on his own.

Cardiff Crown Court heard that entering Milford Haven is potentially dangerous due to its narrow entrance, strong tides and weather patterns.

Mr Hill said: "The entrance requires careful navigation by a sufficiently trained and experienced pilot. Mr Pearn had never before attempted to bring in alone a vessel comparable in size to the *Sea Empress* so close to low water."

The court was told that the port authority had agreed to pay the legal costs of the Environment Agency, which brought the prosecution, of £825,000. Mr Hill called for "maximum financial penalties" because of the scale of the pollution. The case continues.

Second radical group is linked to mosque

Leader advocates resistance against Britain, report Adrian Lee, Stephen Farrell and Dominic Kennedy

THE London mosque at the centre of international police investigations into a plot to bomb British targets in Yemen has become a magnet for radical groups.

It emerged yesterday that a second Muslim organisation that endorses violence has strong links with the Finsbury Park mosque.

Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed, whose group, Al Muhajiroun, believes in resistance by Muslims against the United States and Britain, is a former leader of the mosque. Its current leader, Abu Hamza, a close friend of Sheikh Bakri, runs his own extreme organisation, Supporters of Shariah, from the building. Abu Hamza is being monitored by several intelligence agencies.

Sheikh Bakri said yesterday that he had taught four of the young British Muslims arrested in Yemen for allegedly plotting to bomb British targets. He also said money raised at the mosque was used to fund "legal resistance" by Muslim groups in Kashmir, Palestine, Kosovo and Bosnia.

According to Sheikh Bakri, Mr Hamza, who lost his hands and the sight in one eye while fighting in Afghanistan, receives a disability allowance from the British Government.

Up to 1,000 people are said to attend weekly prayers led by Mr Hamza, after which donations are made. It is not uncommon for Muslim businessmen to make single donations of £5,000 to their local mosques. More money is raised during Ramadan, when worshippers pay an additional £3 per family member to the mosque. Those with savings of more than £750 must pay 2.5 per cent of their total wealth each year to the mosque. Some of the cash goes to charity. Asked if any money went to fund opposition to the United States, Sheikh Bakri said: "It is up to Abu Hamza where it goes."

Sheikh Bakri, 40, visited the Finsbury mosque last week to attend a prayer night. His group, Al Muhajiroun, which campaigns for a single Muslim state, lists one of its aims as demonstrating "against the British authority . . . and the policies of the British Government." It states on its website: "British man-made law is war against God . . . Islam will dominate the whole world."

In the past Sheikh Bakri has made outspoken attacks on homosexuals, claimed that the Holocaust was a fabrication and justified the bombings of American targets in Africa, but regretting the deaths of people. He was interviewed by Special Branch in the early 1990s for allegedly calling for the assassination of John Major. He denied the allegation and was never charged.

Although he opposed the kidnapping and killing of Britons, Sheikh Bakri, who holds a British passport, said yesterday that he supported action against British and American targets in the Middle East. He said: "We have the right to retaliate. I don't call it violence, it is the divine right to fight back. Muslims must resist."

Sheikh Bakri said that he had met several of the British Muslims who are under arrest in Yemen while he was teaching in Birmingham.

"Yes, I know them personally. I taught them Islam, jurisprudence and foreign policy. They are intellectual people, peaceful young men." He said they were not members of Al Muhajiroun and he had not advised them to travel to Yemen.

Sheikh Bakri's links with the Finsbury Park mosque and the activities of Mr Hamza, who has organised camps there at which military skills were taught to young men, is causing alarm among many moderate Muslims.

One senior Muslim academic said that he was offended that camps, involving military training, were taking place at the mosque. He said he had never heard of such activities at other mosques in Britain.

It is understood that police have recently investigated the camps and decided that they were not illegal. They are advertised on a website, which depicts a hand grenade. Yesterday the website provider, Islamic Gateway, which offers free Internet space to a wide range of Muslim organisations, said that it would remove the grenade graphic and reference to military training.

Abdul-Rahman al-Adhami, Islamic Gateway's co-ordinator, said: "We think this is beyond the limits that we have agreed with the Supporters Of Shariah. We do not support, or have any contact with that organisation other than providing web space."

Another Muslim, aged 24, who asked not to be named, said he had visited the Finsbury Park mosque and found the atmosphere intimidating.

"Abu Hamza is a difficult man. He thinks the way of Islam is to fight. They teach people to hate people. I think 70 per cent of Muslims would like to see this man removed."

Mr Hamza said yesterday that he expected to be questioned by police over his links with the five Britons arrested in Yemen. He refused to comment further, saying he would add nothing more until Ramadan ended. His stepson is one of those under arrest, and his natural son is on the run and wanted by the authorities in Yemen.

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Sheikh Bakri is a former leader of Finsbury Park mosque, which has been used to give young Muslims military training



Monica Davis, wife of Ghulam Hussein, one of the men held in Yemen, at a press conference yesterday

Law provides a haven for radicals

By Michael Binyon, Diplomatic Editor

LONDON'S reputation as a haven for Islamic extremists has been given embarrassing reinforcement by the allegations against the British Muslims detained in Yemen and the calls for the overthrow of the Yemeni Government from a North London mosque.

Britain has come under growing pressure in the past five years to clamp down on the Islamic groups that have proliferated in this country, some of which are accused of masterminding terrorist actions in the Middle East.

Algeria, Egypt, Turkey, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and several Gulf states have accused Britain of turning a blind eye to extremists who have fled here to continue their political activities while seeking asylum. Their governments have demanded a sharp crackdown on dissident exiles and have accused Britain of hypocrisy in tolerating the plotting of violent actions against friendly governments and even against Western interests.

In response, the Government rushed through a new law on the back of last year's emergency terrorist legislation after the Omagh bombing. For the first time this made it an offence to plot terrorist activity abroad or to collect money to support foreign terrorists. The law does not prohibit the promotion or incitement to terrorism, unlike previous proposed Conservative legislation, because of the difficulties of definition and Britain's tradition of free speech.

Nevertheless, the Government has come under strong pressure to clamp down, especially after French claims that the bombings of the Paris Metro may have been masterminded by London-based supporters of the Algerian extremist Islamic Armed Group (GIA). Arab governments claimed that a network of extremist groups in Britain was supporting each other, and that one group, "al-Ansar" (The Helpers), was circulating pamphlets in North London mosques calling for the killing of foreigners in Algeria.

Fresh accusations were levelled at Britain by Egypt after the Luxor bombings, which Cairo said were inspired by Egyptian extremist exiles in London. In reply Britain promised to share intelligence information with Cairo and to keep a close watch on known extremist groups.

John Major told Arab ambassadors in London three years ago that Islamic extremists were not welcome here, and he also reassured President Chirac that security surveillance of such groups would be stepped up.

The issue came to a head with the proposal for a "Rally for Revival" of radical Islamic groups at the London Arena in September 1996. This followed two earlier rallies at Wembley which led to demonstrations by Jewish and homosexual groups that accused the radicals of inciting hatred.

The organisers proposed inviting well-known radicals, including Osama bin Laden. Several Arab governments threatened retaliatory action and the cancellation of contracts with Britain if the rally went ahead. It was eventually cancelled because the organisers could not get insurance cover.

Coastline is on edge of collapse

Experts fear that the Beachy Head collapse will be followed by others, reports Nick Nuttall

THE Government was yesterday told to act urgently to counter the danger of further coastal erosion in the wake of the landslide at Beachy Head.

Stretches of the east and south coasts could be the next to collapse as torrential rains and high waves continue to pound Britain. Part of the Holderness Coast in Yorkshire, a strip east of Lyme Regis in Dorset, and a 200 metre stretch of cliffs on the Isle of Wight have been identified as most immediately vulnerable.

John Gummer, the Conservative MP for Suffolk Coastal and former Environment Secretary, has tabled a series of Commons questions to John Prescott, the Secretary for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, and Nick Brown, the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr Gummer is to ask Mr Brown if he will now reconsider the "savage" cut in the rate of financial support from the Government for coastal defences — down by 20 per cent in many cases. He said the Government had also made it more difficult for local authorities to get this support. Mr Gummer wants to know who is to be in overall charge of countering the threat to the coastline and is urging the minister to establish an integrated programme of action.

The threat to Britain's coastline — illustrated so dramatically when a large chunk of Beachy Head crashed down — is a product both of global warming, which is causing sea levels to rise, and the tilting effect that is a legacy of the last Ice Age.

Monitoring equipment has picked up yawning cracks in the cliffs on the Isle of Wight, at Freshwater Bay, and a £2 million scheme is to save the cliff road from collapse is ready to go into action.

Yesterday the Environment Agency warned sightseers to stay well away from Beachy Head, where a 50ft by 200ft section of the chalk cliff-face tumbled into the sea on Sunday night. A spokesman for the agency said: "The conditions are absolutely atrocious with high winds and lots of rain. We could get a large cliff fall at any time".

A geotechnics expert whose firm advises councils and Mr Prescott's department on erosion said that the coast from North Yorkshire down through East Anglia and south along to West Dorset and Devon was vulnerable. Dr Alan Clark said: "It is impossible to say where the next collapse will occur. But you only need to look at the geology of the British coast to see where it is at risk." One of the areas most at risk, he said, was the Holderness Coast, running from Spurn Head to Bridlington, which is made of soft clay and over the past 1,000 years has lost about a mile.

At Freshwater Bay, near Afton Down, where the hazardous cracks are being monitored, pile-driving will hold up the road when — rather than if — the Isle of Wight rock face collapses, Dr Clark said.

Global warming is forecast to bring an average rise in sea levels of 24 centimetres in the next 50 years because of thermal expansion of the oceans and melting glaciers, according to the Hadley Centre, part of the Meteorological Office at Bracknell. Britain is also tilting because of movements associated with the last Ice Age, with Scotland rising and the South of England falling.

Dr Clark, who works for High-Point Rendel in London, said yesterday that the Hadley Centre estimated that, when the tilt effect was factored in, sea levels around northern Scotland would rise by 16 centimetres and those in southern England by 31 centimetres by the middle of the next century.

He said other features of global warming, including more violent storms, rainfall and waves, could hasten cliff collapse.

The rate of loss is currently a metre a year on the south coast, Martin Lee of Newcastle University said yesterday. On parts of the east coast, the rate is twice that, and in some places even more rapid. The composition of the cliffs helps determine the rate of erosion.

Mr Lee, a geomorphologist, said that the cliffs on the east coast were deposited by glaciers between 15,000 and 30,000 years ago. They were made up of clay and rocks, and far softer than the chalk cliffs of the south, which were formed during the Cretaceous period 30 million to 100 million years ago. Both kinds of coastline are being undermined by wave action.

The rubble formed by the collapse at Beachy Head will eventually be washed away, leaving the foot of the cliffs vulnerable to wave action.

Above this the chalk is riddled with fractures, fissures and cracks more than a metre wide. Some of these expand and become unstable due to effects such as rainwater seeping down through the chalk.

Martin Culshaw, an engineering geologist at the British Geological Survey in Keyworth, Nottinghamshire, said he believed the heavy winter rains, and the exceptional wetness of 1998, caused the sudden collapse. Freezing temperatures can be a factor, but in this case he believes temperatures have been too high.

The erosion on the east coast is more akin to a landslide than a collapse, with the cliffs slipping into the sea because of internal pressures rather than breaking off.

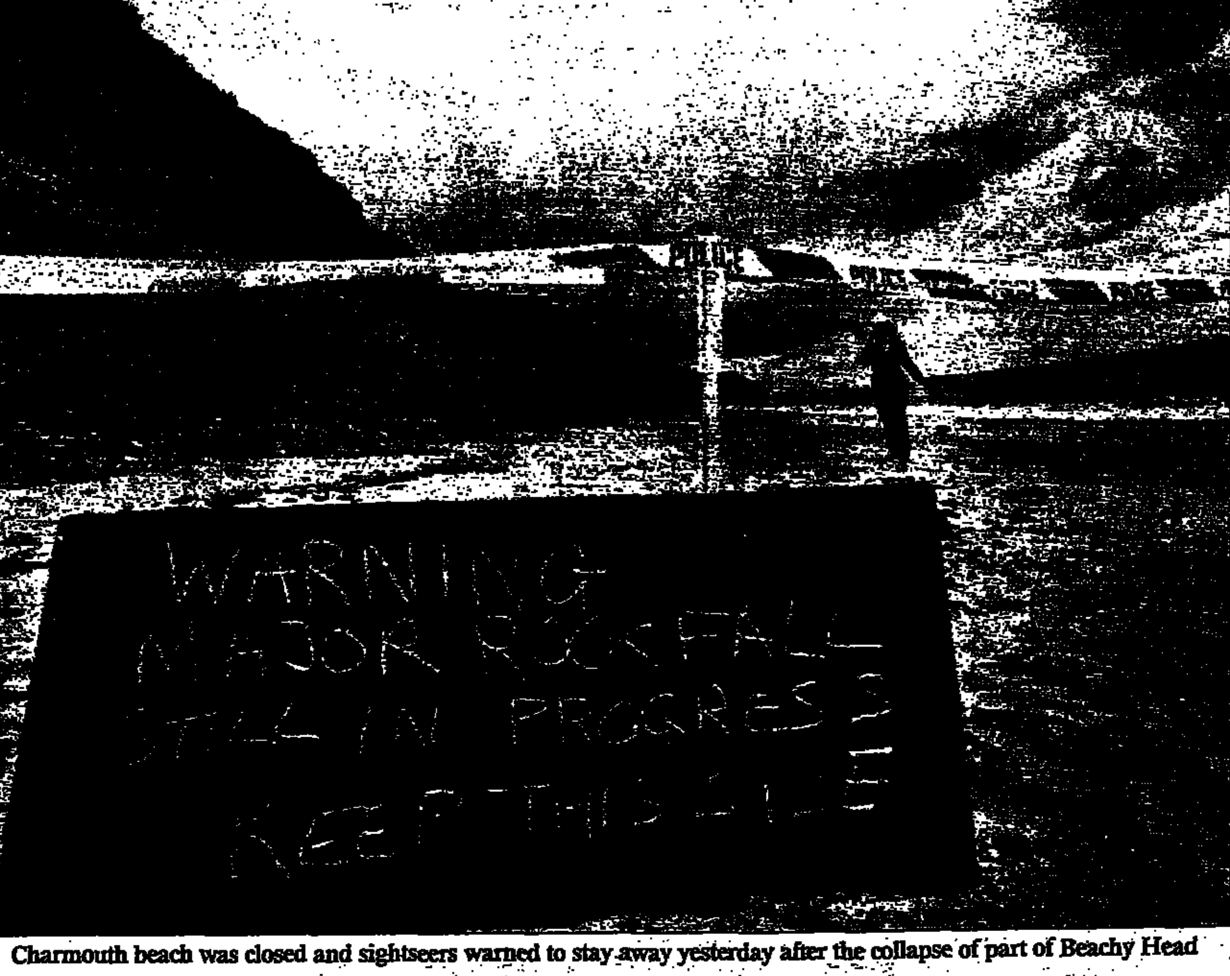
Again, waves erode the foot of the cliffs helping to aggravate huge pressures building up in the layers of clay pressing against each other.

Eventually the pressure, which is also "polishing" the surfaces of clay, reaches a critical point and one of the layers slides down into the sea. Mr Culshaw said the erosion can be accelerated by drought followed by heavy rains.

Concern over the cost of defending vulnerable shorelines has prompted the Environment Agency to consider reducing sea defences.

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RICHARD AUSTIN



Charmouth beach was closed and sightseers warned to stay away yesterday after the collapse of part of Beachy Head

Smoking closes 'mortality gap'

By Ian Murray, Medical Correspondent

MEN are beginning to close the mortality gap with women, largely because they are more successful at giving up smoking.

The latest set of statistics were collected by the Faculty and Institute of Actuaries, which monitors death rates to help determine life insurance premiums. Its figures, based on the numbers of policy holders who died between 1991 and 1994, show that the average life expectancy for men since 1978 has increased by 14 per cent, while women's has increased by only 12 per cent.

When the actuaries made their last survey, from 1975 to 1978, the average male policy holder aged 30 could expect to live to be 76. Today he can expect to live three years and three months longer. The average 30 year old woman in the first survey could expect to reach 83 and 11 months. Today she can look forward to living three years and five months longer.

Although this means that the actual mortality gap has widened slightly, the fact that men's longevity is increasing at a faster rate than that of women, coupled with the fact that more men are giving up smoking, means that the difference is bound to start narrowing before long.

The mortality rate for women who smoked was twice as high as the rate for non-smokers while for men it was 1.7 times higher. This means that on average a 30-year-old woman smoker will die seven years sooner than a non-smoker while a 30-year-old male smoker will die 5.5 years sooner than a male non-smoker. Since 1990, when the actuaries last collected information on smoking, the proportion of men who smoked fell from 31 per cent to 25 per cent while the number of female smokers fell from 25 per cent to 21 per cent. The majority of men who smoked were older than 40 but the majority of women who smoked were under 40.

Figures from the Office of National Statistics suggest that the mortality gap between the sexes will narrow by 2½ months over the next 25 years.

'McLibel' case back in court

By Frances Gibb, Legal Correspondent

THE marathon libel battle brought by McDonald's against two environmentalists returned to court yesterday when the pair lodged an appeal against the ruling that they had libelled the company.

McDonald's launched the libel suit after Dave Morris, 44, and Helen Steel, 33, distributed pamphlets entitled *What's wrong with McDonald's? Everything they don't want you to know.* In 1997, Mr Justice Bell found in McDonald's favour on some points, but also upheld the pair's claim that the chain's advertising overstated its food's nutritional benefit, and that it had exploited children through its advertising, was responsible for animal cruelty and paid low wages.

The pair now argue that these findings were so damning to the reputation of McDonald's that the corporation's claim for libel should have been thrown out.

The hearing, at the Court of Appeal, continues.

Minister drops plan to ban untreated milk

By Michael Hornsby, Agriculture Correspondent

THE Government has abandoned plans to ban the sale of unpasteurised milk, despite concern that it could be contaminated with harmful bacteria.

Nick Brown, the Agriculture Minister, has told producers of untreated milk that he has "put a stop" to the ban, which was proposed in November 1997.

Mr Brown has decided that the risks from drinking "green top" milk, which accounts for no more than 1 per cent of total milk sales, do not justify removing the right of consumers to buy it. The Government is expected, however, to impose tougher conditions on raw milk production, including more frequent hygiene tests, paid for by producers.

Pasteurisation involves heating milk to a temperature required to kill potentially harmful pathogens, such as salmonella, campylobacter, *E. coli* and tuberculosis.

Enthusiasts say that pasteurisation reduces the flavour of untreated milk and leaves it less rich in vitamins and other health-giving properties.



Brown: said people had right to buy 'green top'

Untreated milk has been banned for sale in Scotland since 1983. In England and Wales, farm shops and milkmen can still sell it with a warning on the label that it may contain organisms harmful to health.

Regular drinkers of unpasteurised milk include the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, and the Prince of Wales, who are supplied by their own herds of dairy cattle at Windsor and Highgrove.

Sir Julian Rose, the chairman of the Association of Unpasteurised Milk Producers and Consumers, said yesterday: "This is very good news.

"We have campaigned long and hard for the future of 'green top' and it has been clear from the outset that the grounds for a ban never stacked up."

The decision was deplored by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. Anne Goodwin, the institute's assistant secretary for food, said: "The Government is ignoring the warnings of its own scientific advisers. It does not make sense to take risks with dangerous new pathogens such as *E.coli 0157*."

The ban was proposed on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food after surveys of raw cows' milk found food poisoning pathogens and "substantial" evidence of faecal contamination.

Tipsters back Hughes for double

By Dalya Alberge, Arts Correspondent

THE late Poet Laureate, Ted Hughes, yesterday received another posthumous prize, the Whitbread Poetry Award, a day after he won the T.S. Eliot Poetry Prize and a year after winning the overall Whitbread Book of the Year.

His poignant collection, *Birthday Letters*, goes on to form part of the shortlist for this year's £21,000 Whitbread Book of the Year, to be announced later this month. He won last year with *Tales from Ovid*.

In the Whitbread's 28th year, Hughes faces competition from Justin Cartwright, who yesterday won the Novel Award; Amanda Foreman, who was singled out for the Biography Award for her first book, on Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire; and Giles Foden, deputy literary editor of *The Guardian*, who took the First Novel Award.

Hughes's powerful verse about his tragic relationship with Sylvia Plath is the favourite both with the bookmakers William Hill and many in the literary world. The Whitbread judges, who included the poet U.A. Fanthorpe, said: "In this very personal collection Hughes avoids every pitfall — of remorse, self-pity, self-justification — that the subject, his wife's suicide, could have led him into. His account of that relationship seems hewn from granite."

Hughes's daughter, Frieda, a painter and poet, said: "I am so happy that there are people who think he's as extraordinary as I do."

Among previous Whitbread winners are Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* in 1986, John Richardson's *A Life of Picasso* in 1991 and Seamus Heaney's *The Spirit Level* in 1996.

Cartwright has won this year's novel category for *Leading the Cheers*, the story of recently unemployed man who returns to small-town America for his high-school reunion and rediscovers a past life, vastly different from his own successful cosmopolitan existence in London.

The Children's Book of the Year will be announced on January 26, with the overall winner from the other categories. BBC2 will broadcast the ceremony that night.

Duke stays with Navy for liaison job

By Alan Hamilton

THE Duke of York is to remain in the Navy, and will be promoted to a new post in international relations, the Ministry of Defence announced yesterday.

Last year the Duke, 38, indicated that he might leave the Navy after nearly 20 years' service, but he has been persuaded to accept promotion to the rank of commander and to take on a challenging role liaising with other navies.

Currently a lieutenant-commander working in the Directorate of Naval Operations in Whitehall, the Duke will remain at MoD headquarters when he takes up his new post in April with the diplomacy section of the Naval Staff Directorate. It will entail a £9,000 pay rise to £45,000. The Duke is understood to have been persuaded to stay by the challenge of the new job and the lack of a regular family life to return to. His royal duties remain relatively light.

His new post will involve the planning and administration of bilateral naval staff talks, as well as other liaison duties in Britain and overseas.

An MoD spokesman said last night: "The Duke will make full use of the extensive experience he has gained with MoD and elsewhere. He has a unique blend of skills; clearly his royal background will help, plus he has a fundamental understanding of the working of MoD."

Buckingham Palace said last night that the Queen had been consulted on the appointment and that she and the Duke of Edinburgh were "very pleased".

The Duke joined the Navy commission in 1979, and saw active service as a helicopter pilot during the Falklands conflict. He is currently responsible for the effectiveness of frigate and destroyer aviation.

Premier League kicks off fight to save TV deal

£25m case starts with warning on the threat to life blood of football, reports John Goodbody

TWO former government ministers — Kenneth Clarke and David Mellor — are on the teamsheet for the FA Premier League in its court battle over television rights. Mr Clarke, the former Tory Chancellor, who is a Nottingham Forest supporter, will find himself on the same side as the Labour MP Joe Ashton, a Sheffield Wednesday director and chairman of the all-party parliamentary football group, who is also being called by the League to give evidence.

The Football Task Force, headed by David Mellor, a Chelsea fan and former Tory minister, has backed the Premier League's fight to preserve its exclusive broadcasting agreement with BSkyB and the BBC.

The Director-General of Fair Trading wants to outlaw the £743 million deal on the grounds that it is anti-competitive and against the public interest. In a case expected to last four months, the OFT will contend that the League's 20 member-clubs are operating as a cartel by selling their rights collectively.

Yesterday was the opening day of the most expensive legal case in British sporting history, estimated to be costing up to £25 million. Charles Aldous, QC, for the League, told the Restrictive Practices Court that the "life blood" of English soccer — the fans — would drain away if the Office of Fair Trading succeeded in having the collective broadcasting agreement declared unlawful.

Allowing the clubs to sign individual agreements with other broadcasters would result in a free-for-all and saturation television coverage, he said.

"The life blood of football has always been its supporters, those prepared to attend home and away matches at all times of the year and in all kinds of weather," he told Mr Justice Ferris, sitting with two lay members, Brian Currie, a chartered accountant, and David Summers, a retired publisher.

"We must avoid a situation where fans stay at home in increasing numbers to watch the more fashionable clubs on television."

At the moment only 60 Premiership matches are shown live by BSkyB, with highlights in the BBC's *Match of the Day*. The two channels' deal with the Premier League lasts for four years. If the OFT wins the case, all 380 matches could be screened live on satellite, cable or terrestrial channels.

Mr Aldous said the deal benefited football as a whole, not just Premier League clubs, each of which was shown on television at least three times last season. He argued that money filtered down to small clubs and the roots of the game.

The issue of collective negotiation was not just relevant to football, Mr Aldous said. Governing bodies of sports such as rugby union and cricket were watching the case with concern.

Evidence in the case will start next Monday. The Premier League's witnesses will also include the Chelsea chairman Ken Bates, the referee David Elleray and the former England player David Platt.

News International, the subsidiary of The News Corporation that owns *The Times*, owns 40 per cent of BSkyB.

The case continues.



Each night Phil Naish dresses as a pharaoh and tries to reflect the life of Ancient Egypt in his Cardiff home

The man who takes after his mummy

By Simon de Bruxelles

FROM the outside it is just an ordinary terraced house. But behind the front door lie the wonders of Ancient Egypt, and Cardiff's very own Pharoah.

Phil Naish has turned his fascination into an art form. Every evening he dons clothes similar to those worn by Rameses the Great, then reclines in one of his two replica thrones.

The house in Roath, Cardiff, has become a shrine to the rulers of Ancient Egypt. Mr Naish, a 40-year-old artist, is fortunate that his wife Suzanne shares his interest. Their home is packed with replicas of Egyptian statues, paintings and jewellery. His most prized object is a scarab 4000 years old, used by the builders of the pyramids to mark the end of a day's work. He said: "I have become quite well known locally for my interest. In fact, I've been given the nickname Rameses."



Alistair Hector: planned to return to Scotland

Briton dies in South African carjacking

By Tim Jones and Ray Kennedy

A FATHER of two young boys who was planning to return to Scotland from South Africa because his wife was terrified by a growing tide of violence has been murdered just yards from his home.

Alistair Hector, 52, who was born in Stonehaven and educated at Laurencekirk, near Aberdeen, was left to die in the road after being shot in the head by a gang and dragged from his pick-up truck.

Mr Hector, a self-employed engineer, had put his house in Benoni, near Johannesburg, on the market and hoped to return to Scotland in the spring. His mother, Catherine, said yesterday that he had been in South Africa for 14 years, but his wife, Margaret, 47, had become concerned for the safety of their two sons, Kevin, nine and Marc, eight.

"It is just dreadful. He was at a junction just a few yards from his home when they came towards him and shot him in his car. Then they pulled him out and drove away in it," she said.

"Although he loved the country, Margaret wanted to come home because she was terrified by the violence. She told me gunmen just picked drivers at random and shot them to get their cars.

"I asked Margaret if anyone saw the killing, but she said there is no way people would come forward because they would be next to be killed."

Marcia Havemann, of the Johannesburg police, said that Mr Hector's car had been found abandoned near the coalmining town of Ogies, 30 miles from the scene of the crime. "We are shocked. No crime is acceptable to us and we want to send out the message that we will investigate this murder," Inspector Havemann said.

Five Britons were injured in Cape Town last August when a bomb exploded at the Planet Hollywood restaurant. The Foreign Office warns people visiting South Africa to be on guard against carjacking and armed robbery, to avoid driving in rural areas at night, and to stay away from townships.

NEWS IN BRIEF

GP denies three more murders

A GP yesterday denied murdering three of his women patients. Harold Shipman, 52, of Hyde, near Manchester, is accused of killing eight patients.

In a 12-minute hearing at Preston Crown Court yesterday, Dr Shipman denied murdering Bianka Pomfret, 49, Winifred Mellor, 73, and Joan Melia, 73. Four other murder charges were adjourned to March 1 at Manchester Crown Court. He has already denied murdering Kathleen Grundy, 81, a former mayoress of Hyde. The trial has been set for October.

A bridge too fast

A Tory MP was banned from driving for 14 days after being caught travelling at nearly twice the speed limit. Howard Flight, who speaks for his party on transport issues, admitted driving at 73mph over a 40mph bridge. He was fined £540 by Ipswich magistrates.

Helmet safety

A campaign to cut the number of deaths among the 8 million child cyclists has received [illegible] from the National Lottery. The Bicycle Helmet Initiative Trust wants to increase the percentage of children who wear a helmet from 18 per cent to at least 40 per cent.

Tie hanging

A 13-year-old girl was in a serious condition in hospital after being found hanging by her school tie. Her mother cut her down and dialled 999, and was advised on resuscitation *until an ambulance arrived at* their home in Wythenshawe, Manchester, six minutes later.

Footballer fined

Footballer Trevor Sinclair was fined £250 and ordered to pay £225 compensation for leaping on a teenage girl's car during drunken horse-play after his West Ham club's Christmas party. Sinclair, 25, pleaded guilty at Havering Magistrates Court, East London.

Beatle damages

George Harrison, the former Beatle, accepted an apology and substantial damages over an allegation in a book, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counter Culture* by Jonathon Green, that he had sexual favours in return for a donation to the charity Release.

Pour getaway

A safe carried away by thieves contained only 350 teabags. The safe was taken from Trent Buses in Hucknall, Nottinghamshire. A spokesman said: "We never keep money on the premises and the only bonds in the safe were Brooke Bond."

Ethics commissioner could help ministers avoid scandal



The Mandelson affair was avoidable. It was, after all, not the first time that a minister has faced ethical charges. There have been many such episodes in the last few years: Jonathan Aitken, Neil Hamilton, Lord Simon of Highbury, the Bernie Ecclestone affair, and Geoffrey Robinson. A common thread is that the inquiries were mishandled by Whitehall.

All new ministers receive a copy of the *Ministerial Code*, revised last year. This sets out a long list of potential problems for ministers to watch, on which they should consult their permanent secretaries. But the latter are not experts on ethical issues, so interpretations can vary between departments. And they are responsible to these same ministers.

A number of ministers and special advisers have told me how unsatisfactory this system is. They have found it hard to get clearcut advice. There is naturally a tendency for civil servants to tell their ministers that everything is all right.

When wrongdoing is alleged, the Prime Minister has usually asked the Cabinet Secretary to conduct a rapid inquiry to see whether rules have been followed. This is also flawed, as Sir Robin Butler's inquiry into allegations against Mr Aitken showed. The Cabinet Secretary is not a detective or an investigating magistrate. He is not really in a position to challenge the truth of claims made by a minister. He has to accept that the minister is truthful and honourable.

One solution is to extend the remit of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards who investigates charges against MPs and examines compliance with the register of members' interests. Even before she takes over as commissioner next month, Elizabeth Filkin has floated the idea that her office should inquire not just into the affairs of MPs but also "what they do if they happen to be in ministerial positions". The Neill Committee on Standards in Public Life is reviewing the issue in its review of the implementation of the Nolan report.

Ms Filkin is wrong. Ministers are also usually MPs, but the roles are distinct and should not be confused. Ministers are accountable to the Commons, but their appointment is dependent on the Prime Minister. Their conduct as ministers should be examined separately.

A better answer would be to have an independent ethics commissioner who, with a small staff, would advise ministers and investigate any allegations of wrongdoing. Such a commissioner would act like the Business Appointments Committee in advising ministers, and special advisers, on how to handle potential conflicts of interest. He or she would be separate from the Civil Service, and therefore able to question ministers.

Ministers would be under an obligation to consult such a commissioner on their appointment to discuss any potential conflicts of interest. That would, for instance, have allowed Lord Simon to answer the unfair charges over his BP shares. It would also have forced Mr Mandelson to deal with the consquences of his loan from Mr Robinson when he became a minister, and again when he became Trade and Industry Secretary last summer.

Martin Le Jeune, a former assistant secretary of the Nolan committee, is worried that an ethics adviser would undermine democratic accountability. However, such a commissioner would quickly be able to deal with charges about conflicts of interest, and thus dampen the current feverish mood in which the press and the Opposition chase any claims and demand resignations.

That encourages cynicism about politics and discourages businessmen and others with outside interests from becoming involved in politics. An ethics adviser might help to clear the air.

'Insulting' envoy rebuked by new Labour women

By Valerie Elliott, Whitehall Editor


ANDREW STUART

Sir David yesterday: he said he found nothing offensive in the term "company wife"

SIR DAVID GORE-BOOTH, the Old Etonian former ambassador, yesterday mounted a robust defence of political incorrectness after facing the wrath of two new Labour women MPs.

His alleged *faux pas* was to describe British women in Saudi Arabia as "company wives", a term considered "deeply offensive" and "a generic subclass" by Helen Jones, (Warrington North and ex-Ursuline Convent, Chester) and Linda Clark, QC (Edinburgh Pentlands and ex-Lawside Academy, Dundee).

But Sir David, the son of a former head of the Foreign Office who has survived 34 years of diplomatic manoeuvrings and shenanigans, was clearly mystified. "I don't think FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) wives will be marching in the streets if they are called FCO wives." He also renewed his attack on the "erosion of ministerial responsibility towards civil servants" and after the hearing he suggested the Foreign Office was in danger of being staffed by "yes-men and time-servers". Nevertheless the Gore-Booth style of diplomacy has prompted new guidance to ambassadors on how to handle complaints.

Sir David, 55, appeared before the Commons Public Administration Committee yesterday to defend his role after being censured by the Parliamentary Ombudsman, Michael Buckley, for high-handed behaviour towards Paul Surtees, a former British Aerospace employee, in Saudi Arabia.

Sir David, who served as High Commissioner in New Delhi and as Ambassador in Riyadh, found himself under attack over his style of language in a letter to the British Aerospace chief executive about complaints from Mr Surtees. Rhodri Morgan, the Labour committee chairman, compared Sir David to a character straight out of Evelyn Waugh, who satirised the manners of the upper classes.

Mr Morgan objected to Sir David's phrase "one of yours" to describe Mr Surtees to his boss and said it was "an incredibly disrespectful tone".

At one point a bemused Sir David admitted: "I find this concentration on language totally bizarre." He later conceded: "I am perhaps not a very politically correct person."

Ms Jones was not amused: "You saw individuals purely as creatures of their companies. What is a company wife? I find your language in that letter extremely offensive. Can you define to me what is a company wife?".

Sir David: "I don't myself find anything offensive about the phrase company wife. Company wife means the wife of someone employed in the company."

Ms Jones: "So you think women working abroad are defined purely by the company for which their husbands work?"

> 'This concentration on language is bizarre ... I am perhaps not a very politically correct person'

Sir David: "I find nothing offensive about the term company wife any more than I find anything offensive about the term FCO wife."

Ms Jones: "Perhaps that says much about the attitude of the Foreign Office."

Dr Clark told Sir David that many women found such language "rather insulting" and suggested he should avoid it. She said: "Can you take it from me that some women do find it offensive to be classed as some kind of generic subclass." Sir David replied: "The offence is in the eye of the beholder."

Peter Bradley, Labour MP for The Wrekin, added: "Where do you acquire that sort of arrogance? Was it at your father's knee? Was it at Eton? Was it in 34 years in the diplomatic service?"

But Sir David said the word "arrogant" was pejorative and unnecessary. He was unrepentant about the Surtees case, disagreed with the Ombudsman's findings, and disapproved of the £5,000 compensation paid. Sir John Kerr, the Head of the Diplomatic Service, later told MPs it was "a disgraceful incident in which a triple apology was in order". But he did not believe "one mistake" should blemish Sir David's distinguished career. Sir John described his ex-colleague as "a cavalier. I am something of a roundhead." But he added: "I do not want a service of automatons."

MPs to tell Blair Mandelson must stay on sidelines

By Roland Watson, Political Correspondent

TONY BLAIR will today face blanket opposition from Labour MPs against Peter Mandelson making an early return to government.

The Prime Minister will be told that the mood of the party is strongly against a comeback before the next election as friends of Mr Mandelson admitted such talk was severely damaging the former Trade Secretary. Mr Blair is also being warned by leading figures that his standing will suffer unless he puts distance between himself and his fallen friend.

The Prime Minister is coming under pressure to be seen to criticise Mr Mandelson and get away from the impression that he cannot do without him.

The strength of feeling goes far beyond party traditionalists. Even loyalist MPs say the mood has hardened since the parliamentary term started on Monday.

It emerged yesterday that Mr Mandelson could soon take up a strategic role for Labour in this year's local, European, Scottish and Welsh elections, although he is believed to be cautious about moving back to Millbank, the party's headquarters, because it would look like a return to his spin-doctor past. Senior MPs, though, believe that he could give the party's campaign for the coming elections much-needed shape and direction.

Today's warning will be delivered when Mr Blair meets Labour's Parliamentary Committee, the liaison body between backbenchers and ministers, for the first time since Mr Mandelson quit. The Prime Minister will also be warned of the dangers of allowing Mr Mandelson to act as his link man with the German Government, a role he played last week to the astonishment of MPs.

However, a Downing Street spokesman said Mr Mandelson wanted to be out of frontline politics "for the forseeable future" and that all other suggestions were "hype and mischief-making".

Ken Livingstone, the left-wing MP for Brent East, yesterday accused Mr Mandelson of having dragged Labour "through the mud". He said the MP for Hartlepool had disgraced the party name with his "personal ambition and private gain".

Mr Mandelson was facing a further storm with the accusation that he planned to oust both Mr Brown and Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, to position himself as Tony Blair's "heir apparent" after the next election. The claim is made in the unauthorised biography, out next week, by the journalist Paul Routledge.

Mr Blair will also come under pressure in the Commons today as William Hague has his first chance to raise Mr Mandelson's departure at Prime Minister's Questions and a Liberal Democrat motion will accuse ministers of allowing personal rivalries to mar the presentation of policy.

Labour to give up veto on life peers

By James Landale, Political Correspondent




Baroness Dean and Lord Pym are thought to be possible members of the new appointments commission

TONY BLAIR is to give up his power to veto potential life peers nominated by the Tories and Liberal Democrats as part of the Government's plans to reform the House of Lords.

In a significant reduction in his patronage, the Prime Minister will next week promise not to interfere in lists of nominees put forward by William Hague and Paddy Ashdown.

Mr Blair will restrict his patronage further by allowing a new appointments commission to nominate independent crossbench peers without interference from Downing Street.

The moves will come as part of the Government's White Paper on Lords reform which is expected to be published next week. The appointments commission will have seven members: an independent chairman, three representatives of the main political parties, and three non-partisan appointees.

The new body will take over the bulk of the work of the existing Political Honours Scrutiny Committee in vetting potential life peers for financial and other improprieties.

The members are expected to be appointed later this year and start work once hereditary peers have lost their sitting and voting rights. The Government is expected shortly to appoint more Labour life peers — probably 50 — to ensure broadly equal numbers with the Tories.

A Whitehall source said: "The appointments commission will take over the appointment of crossbenchers. The Prime Minister will undertake to present its recommendations to the Queen without interference. That will also be true of nominations from other political leaders."

Political working peers are appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of Downing Street. Mr Blair will retain control over the power of patronage that matters — the number of new peers given to each party.

But for the first time since 1958 when life peers were created, a Prime Minister will not have full control over the lists sent to Buckingham Palace. If the lists of nominees put forward by Mr Hague and Mr Ashdown are accepted by the appointments commission, their names will go direct to the Queen without change.

Prime Ministers in the past are understood to have blocked specific individuals put forward by opposition leaders. Although the secrecy surrounding such appointments makes this difficult to prove, both Tory and Labour sources last night admitted that horse-trading between the leaders' offices had taken place. "There were undoubtedly occasions when the Labour Party leadership put forward a name and that name was then blocked," one Labour source said.

Tony Blair this week made clear his enthusiasm to give up certain powers of patronage in an interview on the BBC's *Breakfast with Frost* programme. "I have made it clear ... that I see a reduction in the powers of patronage of the Prime Minister during the course of this first stage of change," he said.

"There will be an appointments commission that will be independent from the Prime Minister and the appointments commission will recommend crossbenchers in the future."

Sources said no thought had yet been given to possible members of the commission. But they could include Lord Pym, the former Tory minister, and Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde, the former print union leader, who are both members of the Political Honours Scrutiny Committee. Others could be Lord Nolan, the former law lord, a suitable bishop, a judge and a representative of ordinary people.

The Government's plans to reform the House of Lords will begin next week when a short Bill scrapping the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote is introduced into the Commons.

If a deal struck by Viscount Cranborne, the former Tory leader in the Lords, survives — under which the Tories would accept the Bill in return for saving some 91 hereditary peers in the short term — the measure could become law later this summer.

Next week's White Paper will also set out the terms and conditions of a royal commission to recommend wider, full-scale reforms of the Upper House.

Its chairman will be announced next week and it should start work next month.

Pension payouts for men sacked at GCHQ

By James Landale

WORKERS sacked from the Government's GCHQ intelligence-gathering centre for refusing to leave their union are to be compensated for lost pension rights.

Robin Cook praised the 14 men for their principled stand in the 1980s against Margaret Thatcher's ban on union membership at the communications centre near Cheltenham.

The Tory Government claimed that union membership posed a security threat and offered £1,000 to each of the 7,000 staff to leave their unions. The 14 who refused were sacked.

In a written answer to a Commons question, the Foreign Secretary said yesterday that he had reached agreement in principle for the compensation after talks with the Council of Civil Service Unions and the TUC.

"This decision reflects the principled stand which the 14 trade unionists took, to the point of dismissal, against the attempt to take away their basic trade union rights," he said. The pension compensation will be provided through a special scheme, which will be laid before Parliament once the details have been finalised. The sums paid to each man will depend on individual circumstances.

John Monks, the TUC General Secretary, said: "This finally closes a sorry chapter in British history. Robin Cook deserves great credit for righting this wrong."

Princess's fund gives £1m to mine charities

Trustees are criticised for refusing to help mine clearance groups, reports Michael Harvey

THE Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund yesterday handed over more than £1 million to 13 landmine charities. All of the grants have gone to victims' organisations, and none to mine clearance groups.

The Princess of Wales was involved in all aspects of the anti-landmine cause during the last year of her life and some clearance charities have criticised the fund for concentrating solely on victims. Andrew Purkis, the fund's chief executive, defended the trustees' decision.

"This is a beginning, it is not the end. We are committed to working with and for the survivors of landmines long-term and sticking at it year in and year out," he said.

"We are strongly in favour in the principle of landmine clearance, but what we have to keep asking ourselves is how we can best make a difference with our money. I certainly would not exclude involvement in mine clearance in the future."

One of the charities that did get a grant was Tim's Fund, set up in memory of 23-year-old Timothy Goggs, who died while clearing landmines in Afghanistan in 1992. His parents, Henrietta and Quentin, of Devizes, Wiltshire, said that the £70,000 grant was particularly appropriate. "Tim's Fund is a memorial project; the Diana Fund is a memorial project and the work of both those people is now going forward together," Mrs Goggs said.

Tim Goggs was posthumously awarded the George Medal for his bravery in trying to rescue his colleagues in the mine explosion that killed him. He left a legacy to Christian Aid for a programme to teach people how to recognise mines and to mark minefields for later destruction. His parents have continued to raise money for the cause.

Tim Goggs had volunteered to go to Afghanistan while waiting to take up a commission at Sandhurst after completing a degree at Newcastle University. He loved the work so much that he stayed for 18 months until his death. He was in charge of a Halo Trust team clearing mines near Kabul, using a Russian tank to push two eight-tonne mine rollers.

The tank ran into a booby-trap designed to stop such a clearance, and three mines exploded directly underneath it, igniting the fuel tank. Tim got out but went back for a friend, Julian Gregson. In doing so, he fatally damaged his lungs. He was flown to Britain but died nearly two weeks later.

Mr Goggs said: "Tim loved what he did and we have travelled to Afghanistan to see the wheat fields growing where he cleared the mines. We wrote to Princess Diana to tell her about the project should she want to go to Afghanistan. Her staff rang back to say she was very interested but it was not to be. She would have approved of this grant."

The trustees of the Princess's fund courted controversy by declining to fund the British Red Cross's work for landmine victims. The Red Cross was pivotal in encouraging the Princess in her crusade against mines and took her on her high-profile trip to Angola in January 1997. Dr Purkis said that the Red Cross grant application did not meet the necessary criteria, but that the fund looked forward to working with the organisation in the near future.

Of the 13 grants, ranging from £11,000 to £125,000, only one was to a charity directly associated with the Princess. The Landmine Survivors Network, which hosted the Princess's trip to Bosnia in August 1997, receives £113,000 in partnership with the Leonard Cheshire International charity to continue its work in Bosnia with the disabled victims of landmines.

The other grants were: £125,000 for Action on Disability and Development; £120,000 for Concern Worldwide; £123,000 for the Jaipur Limb Campaign; £39,600 for Motivation; £20,000 for Disability Awareness in Action/Pan African Federation of Disabled People; £120,000 for POWER; £12,000 for Voluntary Service Overseas; £52,000 for War on Want; £90,625 for World Vision; and £110,000 for the Save the Children Fund.

A grant of £60,000 was made to the UK Working Group on Landmines, the umbrella organisation that campaigns for the banning of landmines.

STUART CONWAY


Quentin and Henrietta Goggs, whose son, Tim, was killed while clearing mines in Afghanistan. Tim's memorial charity was awarded £70,000

SALVAGING HMS ROYAL OAK'S CARGO OF OIL

1 *HMS Royal Oak* lies in 30m of water where she was sunk by U47 on October 14, 1939 with the loss of 833 lives

2 As the ship's hull corrodes, oil leaks out and is beginning to threaten the Orkney Islands' marine environment

3 A steel tent-shaped structure has been built that will fit tightly on *Royal Oak*'s hull

4 Oil leaking from the hull will gradually fill the collector and can then be pumped to the surface for recycling

Navy to remove oil from sunken war grave

Gillian Harris on a clean-up that will leave the wreck of *HMS Royal Oak* intact and reduce the threat to wildlife in Scapa Flow

FOR 60 years *HMS Royal Oak* has lain undisturbed, a grave for the 833 men who died when the battleship was torpedoed by a U-boat.

The fight to preserve the dignity of the wreck, in Scapa Flow off Orkney, has grown fiercer in recent years as the thousands of tonnes of oil seeping from the corroding hull threaten environmental disaster.

Today the Royal Navy will conduct a unique operation that it hopes will remove the oil without needing to cut open the war grave.

Divers will attach a £20,000 steel "umbrella" to the upturned hull to trap the oil before bringing it to the surface where it will be removed each month. It is estimated that the wreck will be empty by 2014.

Conservationists, anxious to protect Scapa Flow's large seal population and several species of rare birds, would prefer a quicker solution.

"It's a time bomb," Eric Meek, an officer with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, said. "The ship is lying less than half a mile offshore and at this time of year Scapa Flow is an area of major importance for Arctic wintering birds.

"Thick furnace oil is leaking through thousands upon thousands of corroded rivets, and adding another 15 years to the 60 years it has already lain there is crazy. The extraction has to be speeded up before we have a disaster on our hands."

Staff from the Royal Navy's Environmental Unit in Bath, who devised the scheme, want to disturb the wreck as little as possible. Slicing into the hull to siphon off what remains of 3,500 tonnes of fuel has been rejected as unsuitable.

The crew of the *Royal Oak*, which sank in October 1939, are not forgotten in Orkney. Each year the islanders hold a service of remembrance in which Navy divers hoist the White Ensign on the ship's stern.

Roger Tollervy, the project's director, spent two years on the plan. He retrieved the ship's plans from the Maritime Museum at Greenwich to create a three-dimensional computer model. Divers then established that oil was escaping through holes created by shrunken rivets.

The divers found that it was the natural action of the tide and winds that was pushing the oil to the surface. Mr Tollervy realised that if a structure could be put in place above the hull, the oil would float into it.

"The hull is surprisingly strong and our intention is to secure the steel canopy, check that the rate of leakage has been accurately estimated and that the device can adequately contain it, and then accelerate the flow," he said. Before taps can be attached to the rivets to guide the oil out more quickly, the canopy has to be tested.

Allan Thomson, managing director of Briggs Marine, a Fife-based construction company, believes that the canopy built from the Royal Navy's designs is safe. "We have spent the past three months amending the original concept," he said. "One side of the canopy has been made longer than the other to compensate for the way she is listing."

Bob Moore, director of Orkney Islands Council Harbours, said: "It's a compromise but hopefully a speedier solution can be arrived at in time."

Royal anchors on sale

TWO spare anchors from the former Royal Yacht *Britannia* have been put up for sale, and are expected to fetch up to £10,000 each.

The anchors, which are about six feet tall and weigh about three tonnes, have been put out to tender after being found in a Ministry of Defence store. While they are similar to military anchors, a small design difference means they cannot be used on warships.

Although tenders are sought for their sale, the ministry may also consider giving them to a museum or another interested party if it was felt to be appropriate.

£97,000 puts fearsome tank back on track

By Simon de Bruxelles

FOR most of the Second World War the Allies had nothing that could touch it. The German Tiger tank was twice the weight of its adversaries, its armour was twice as thick and its enormous gun made their weapons look like peashooters.

Now the most complete Tiger tank is to be restored to working order thanks to a £97,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Since the end of the war the 56-tonne Tiger, captured in North Africa in 1943, has been the most popular attraction at the Tank Museum in Bovington, Dorset. When the year-long restoration is complete it will be the only working Tiger tank in the world, and fit to be reintroduced to one of the last people to see it in action.

In 1943 Peter Gugin was a young lieutenant in 48 Battalion Royal Tank Regiment, commanding three tanks in Tunisia. Mr Gugin, 78, of Leamington Spa, said: "We arrived in Africa with every confidence in our Churchill tanks but the Tiger was a shock."

The Bovington Tiger was captured at Medjez el Bab on April 21, during the advance on Tunis. "The Germans were on high ground and we advanced in the afternoon up the hill from a valley filled with wheat fields," Mr Gugin said. "We not had gone very far when two of our tanks were taken out by two beautifully aimed shots. The first shot passed straight through my tank from the front to the back and set the engine in the rear on fire. Luckily it did not hit any of us and we baled out.

"Seconds later the commander and radio operator of a Churchill near us were blown out of the turret and killed with the entire crew. The rest of our tanks started firing and somehow one of the shots hit the Tiger, which was dug in."

When the hill was taken the fluke nature of the disabling shot was revealed. The two-inch round, which could not have penetrated the armour, had hit the end of the Tiger's 88mm gun, glanced off along the barrel into the turret ring and jammed the turret. Unable to traverse the gun and with the commander slightly wounded, the crew had fled.

Restoration of the Tiger is intended as a memorial to Allied tank crews who had to face the formidable foe. Kate White, project leader, said: "The Tiger attracts worldwide interest because it was one of the most impressive armoured vehicles of the Second World War.

"It will be on static display in the winter but in the summer it will be operated outdoors, where its unique power and character will be on show." More than 1,300 Tigers were built but no more than 12 are believed to have survived.


The Tiger tank at Bovington will be the only working model



Fischer: tax issue is a British problem

Germany returns to attack on EU taxes

By Charles Bremner

AFTER a Christmas truce, Germany yesterday launched a fresh attack over the national right to veto European Union tax matters.

Calling for rapid steps to closer political union, Joschka Fischer, the Foreign Minister, predicted that the EU would be ready for its next round of changes to its basic treaty in 2001. Germany believes that by then only treaty changes should be subject to veto, he said. "The key question here is the Union's readiness to accept majority decisions in as many areas as possible," he added.

Tony Blair has rejected any move to majority voting on taxes, along with German calls for closer "harmony" in fiscal policy, a theme which is being pushed hard by Bonn in its current turn in the EU presidency. France has also backed the idea of majority voting on taxes.

Herr Fischer said he was not trying to create difficulties for Britain just as Mr Blair was bringing it closer to the EU mainstream. But, he added, "the problem is a British one, not a European one".

Mr Blair proclaimed the tax argument closed at the Vienna EU summit last month after he won assurances from the Germans that nobody was seeking "uniform" tax rates across the Union.

Presenting Germany's EU programme to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, Herr Fischer also reinforced Bonn's demands for a review of Britain's special rebate from the EU budget.

Commission fights to avert censure vote

Showdown will decide fate of two members, writes Charles Bremner

THE European Commission was under pressure last night to sacrifice two of its members — Edith Cresson of France and Manuel Marin of Spain — as the price for averting a crippling censure vote by the European Parliament over sleaze and bad management.

The stakes were raised in the Commission's showdown with the Parliament when the European People's Party (EPP), the centre-right group that is its second biggest bloc, threw its weight behind a Liberal-Green motion demanding the resignation of the two commissioners deemed most responsible for malpractice.

With resistance from the dominant Socialist group shaky, the chances are high that a majority of the 626-member assembly could disown the pair in votes tomorrow that risk paralysing the whole EU machine.

The Commission was locked in discussion last night on strategy for cooling the Parliament's ire. Franz Fischler, the Austrian in charge of agriculture, said members were standing behind Mme Cresson and Señor Marin. No Commission member has ever been forced out of office.

Mme Cresson, 65, a controversial former French Prime Minister who is in charge of research and education, is blamed for the mismanagement of millions of pounds in a vocational training programme, as well as for giving Commision contracts to friends. Señor Marin, 49, a long-serving Commissioner in charge of overseas aid, is held responsible for the mismanagement of tens of millions of pounds in various programmes as well as cronyism. Both have rejected all charges.

The Parliament has no power to dismiss individual commissioners and Jacques Santer, the Commission President, was also supporting his colleagues after attempting to defuse parliamentary anger on Monday with new anti-sleaze rules.

However a negative vote would inflict crushing discredit on the Santer team. Continued Commission defiance is certain to boost the vote in favour of all-out censure of the executive. A two-thirds majority would automatically sack the whole Commission.

Party political manoeuvring was adding to the confusion in Strasbourg yesterday as group leaders struggled to lay down clear lines for their members. Pauline Green, the British Labour MEP who leads the Socialist bloc, was struggling to stop a sizeable band of German and other rebels backing censure while also resisting the move against the individual commissioners. "Picking off commissioners is unacceptable to us. If you are going to pick one or two then you are going to have to pick them all. You must sack the lot."

But Mrs Green, under pressure to save the day from Germany and the other left-wing governments, backed away from a promise to support all-out censure if individual commissioners were penalised. Clearly alarmed at the prospect of political disaster, she urged Mr Santer to ensure a favourable vote by fleshing out his reform plans.

Arguing that Commission abuses did not merit full-scale sacking, she charged fellow MEPs with hypocrisy over their failure to clean up sleaze abuses in their own assembly.

By focusing fire on two out of the 20 commissioners, leaders of the Liberals and other smaller groups are making clear their price for saving the skin of the full Commission tomorrow. "A motion of censure is too blunt a measure. What we need is a selective cull," said Edward McMillan-Scott, leader of the British Tories, who are part of the EPP. Only the Greens and smaller groups fully back censuring the whole Commission.

Anger against Mme Cresson, a hot-tempered Socialist who was close to the late President Mitterrand, intensified after an appearance before the Parliament in which she ridiculed the allegations and snapped at MEPs for failing to listen to her. Señor Marin scored somewhat better with an emotional approach in which he proclaimed his personal honesty while acknowledging that mistakes had been made in his administration.

Leading article, page 19



Edith Cresson and Manuel Marin, who face being unseated over alleged fraud and mismanagement

RUDOLF BIHARY / REUTERS



The widow of Jan Ducky is comforted after Slovakia's former Economy Minister was assassinated outside his flat in Bratislava by an unidentified gunman

Slovak ex-minister killed

Bratislava: Jan Ducky, the former Slovak Economy Minister, was assassinated here in front of the apartment block where he lived by a gunman who pumped several bullets into his head, police reported yesterday.

Mr Ducky, 55, served in the Government of Vladimir Meciar, the authoritarian former Prime Minister, from December 1994 to August 1996. He was a close associate of Mr Meciar, who was ousted in elections last September.

Witnesses said Mr Ducky was shot on Monday by a man in his thirties, a spokesman said. Slovak press reports recently indicated that he was involved in a number of suspicious business deals.

The ex-minister was appointed head of Slovakia's gas utility in April 1997, a post he held until last November. He was also a senior member of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, Mr. Meciar's former governing party, the biggest in parliament.

Mr Meciar's Government has been replaced by a five-party coalition amid widespread opposition to his authoritarian style and accusations that it used underhand means to achieve its political ends. Mafia-style violence has also marred Slovakia's reputation.

Mikulas Dzurinda, the new Slovak Prime Minister, has vowed to clean up the country's image and prepare it for membership of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Despite Slovakia's relative economic success it was the only country in the ex-communist bloc to be rejected for EU membership talks on political grounds, in the European Commission's opinions on candidate states in 1997. *(AFP)*

Yeltsin's nuclear officers resign

From Anna Blundy in Moscow

THE resignations of four senior members of Russia's armed forces have jeopardised the country's nuclear security and left President Yeltsin in sole charge of the "nuclear suitcase". *Komsomolskaya Pravda* reported yesterday.

Lieutenant-General Anatoli Sokolov, commander of the Missile Attack Prevention Division, said he felt his work for the army to be "senseless". Three of his deputies also resigned in protest at being brought under the control of the Strategic Missile Troops.

Until now General Sokolov and his colleagues have been regarded as the President's key advisers on the workings of the "nuclear suitcase". Their resignations follow military reforms designed to cut costs and improve efficiency.

The newspaper expressed outrage at the loss of the four senior officers and described with derision the results of General Sokolov's request for a further investigation into the merging of the two units. Apparently, the investigation took the form of reprimands for Russia's foremost electronics experts for wearing shoe laces that were too long.

However, Aleksandr Goltz, military expert for *Itogi* magazine, said the resignations were more the result of internal infighting than a matter of military principle and said nuclear security had not been put at risk. "These men are no longer as important as they used to be and it came as quite a shock to them to be stripped of their status," he said.

Russia's nuclear capability remains a threat both to itself and to the rest of the world. A report last year by Germany's Peace and Conflict Research Foundation said that serious problems with early-warning systems in Russia meant that nuclear weapons were often kept in a permanent state of alert and that they could be launched within minutes of a real or imagined attack.

☐ **Washington:** The United States imposed economic sanctions against a Moscow university and two other Russian institutions, accusing them of leaking nuclear and missile technology to Iran. *(AP)*

'Danger' plant faces inquiry

From Ben Macintyre in Paris

THE government-owned nuclear fuel company in France is under investigation on suspicion of endangering public health by violating safety regulations at its nuclear waste reprocessing plant in La Hague by the Channel.

Acting on a complaint filed by an anti-nuclear group in 1994, Frédéric Chevallier, an investigating magistrate in Cherbourg, announced an inquiry into the company, Cogéma, on suspicion of "putting the life of another in danger by exposing them to the immediate risk of death or injury of a sort leading to mutilation or permanent infirmity, by deliberately violating security obligations as defined by the law".

Cogéma said that it was astonished by the action. "Cogéma formally disputes the charge that it has abandoned, dumped or arranged to have dumped, waste materials in violation of the law," the company said in a statement.

In 1997, French scientists said they had identified a higher incidence of leukaemia among people living near the plant, and in November Greenpeace claimed airborne radioactivity had been detected at levels thousands of times above normal. Cogéma said the gas, Krypton-85, was not highly toxic.

'King Knut' strikes deal over Kosovo hostages

From Tom Walker in Bragas, Kosovo

KNUT VOLLEBAEK, the new chairman of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, yesterday said the Kosovo hostage crisis was over, and that eight Yugoslav army conscripts, held by the ethnic Albanian guerrillas since last Friday, would be released soon.

The Norwegian, on his first visit to Kosovo, could not give details of how a deal had been struck with the Kosovo Liberation Army, or say if any concessions had been made. The KLA had been demanding that at least nine of its fighters held by the Serbs be swapped with the conscripts.

"We are demanding that they all be released and that there are no conditions" was all that Mr Vollebaek would say. KLA sources said they believed a secret deal had been made, in which the Serbs would release some prisoners later.

During a busy day, Mr Vollebaek — dubbed "King Knut" by the press corps for his instant success — viewed at first hand how his 700 unarmed monitors in the province have metamorphosed into peacekeepers. In a convoy of distinctive orange Jeeps, the OSCE chairman drove to Podujevo, around which the Yugoslav Army has massed two armoured infantry companies, their tank barrels pointing in the direction of the hills where the KLA has been holding the conscripts.

Mr Vollebaek, who is the Norwegian Foreign Minister, suffered the indignity of his armoured vehicle sinking axle-deep into mud just short of the army's forward positions. He was rescued by a British monitor in a Land Rover. The British monitors, who have played a crucial role in the hostage negotiations, have admitted that they have become the backbone of the OSCE operation.

"It all stems from our Northern Ireland experience," one former army officer said yesterday. "This whole thing would fall apart pretty quickly without us."

He said that last night was his fifth spent beneath the stars; he slept on a flat patch of gravel behind his Land Rover, he said, keeping a wary eye, round the clock, on the Yugoslav Army.



Vollebaek: demanding release of conscripts

The Kosovo mission's Chief of Staff, Major-General John Drewienkiewicz, a former British Army head of engineering, confirmed that the monitors had been venturing well beyond their original brief of counting troop and guerrilla numbers and equipment.

Over the weekend, when the Yugoslav Army seemed tempted to storm the village of Bajgora, where the army conscripts are being held near the regional KLA headquarters, General Drewienkiewicz said it had been down to the monitors, mostly British and American, to prevent a bloodbath.

"We had to persuade them to step back," he said. "My people walked the tanks back."

In Bragas, a village two miles from Podujevo, the Albanians held a funeral for a local politician assassinated in Pristina on Monday night. His death was blamed, by speakers at the ceremony, on Serbian secret agents.

As he was buried, a volley of fire from a Yugoslav army tank sent dozens of crows into the sky. For Mr Vollebaek, despite his success on hostages, it was a powerful reminder of how fragile the ceasefire is.

First gas station ready for 'green' cars

From Roger Boyes in Bonn

GERMANY turned a little greener yesterday with the opening of Europe's first liquid hydrogen filling station. Hydrogen — three times as powerful as petrol — is being touted as the clean fuel of the 21st century and the race is on to make the first mass-produced hydrogen vehicle.

Since the Green Party entered government — as junior partner to the Social Democrats — industry has pushed hard to develop alternative energy sources.

The filling station, in Hamburg, was symbolic rather than immediately useful. Direct hydrogen injection has proved a complicated way to fuel cars. Prototypes use special fuel cells harnessing 70 per cent of the energy created from the combustion of hydrogen. This compared favourably with petrol combustion but hydrogen has to be cooled to minus 253C (minus 423F) to become a liquid. Direct hydrogen is, at the moment, impractical and uncommercial, but DaimlerChrysler has constructed a prototype using a liquid methanol that is then converted into hydrogen gas. It said vehicles using hydrogen could be on offer by 2004.

Some Green activists are sceptical about the fuel. Although it produces no environmentally damaging waste — only water — the manufacture of hydrogen requires huge energy expenditure. That might make ecological sense for airships — another hydrogen project — but not for mass car production. Even so, the idea has caught the spirit of the times.

Yesterday the German renewable energy company WRE said it would begin selling "green" electricity in England and Wales in April. The electricity regulator, Offer, has given WRE the go-ahead to supply households using the grid system from a consortium of companies that harness solar, water, wind and bio-power.

"Our prices will be about 10 per cent above others but will not be unrealistic — rather they will be in the top third of competitors," said Martin Jakubowski, a WRE director. "In the long term WRE will be able to reduce its electricity price through economies as well as big and efficient plants." The company also plans windparks off the Cornish coast and in the North Sea, near Germany's coast.

Clinton critic accused by porn tycoon

'Hypocrite' taunt hurled at House Republican, writes Damian Whitworth

ONE of President Clinton's fiercest critics has became the latest victim of Larry Flynt, the pornographer, who claimed he was a hypocrite for having an alleged affair and helping his wife to have an abortion.

Bob Barr, a congressman from Georgia, who had called for Mr Clinton to be impeached before anyone had even heard of Monica Lewinsky and is one of the Republican "managers" presenting the case against the President in the Senate, is a stern anti-abortionist and proponent of family values.

In the latest demonstration of the depths to which political life in Washington has sunk, a smirking Mr Flynt produced an affidavit from Mr Barr's former wife, claiming that he had paid for her to have an abortion and had been unfaithful to her.

Gail Barr, who was Mr Barr's second wife, said she was convinced that her husband had an affair with the woman who became his third wife while they were still living together.

Mr Flynt produced transcripts of their divorce proceedings in which Mr Barr invoked a Georgia statute similar to the Fifth Amendment to avoid answering when asked if he had committed adultery. The publisher said he was, therefore, a hypocrite for lambasting Mr Clinton's evasiveness when he was questioned about his relationship with Ms Lewinsky.

Mrs Barr also said that her former husband did not oppose her decision to have an abortion, paid for the operation and drove her to and from the clinic. In public, Mr Barr likens abortion to murder and has said that he would do everything possible to stop his present wife terminating a pregnancy, even if she had been raped.

"To me that represents the ultimate form of hypocrisy and, in many ways, it is worse than not telling the truth under oath," Mr Flynt said.

In a statement yesterday, Mr Barr declined to discuss his personal life, but said: "I have never perjured myself. I have never suggested, urged, forced or encouraged anyone to have an abortion."

Mr Flynt, who publishes *Hustler* and a string of other pornographic magazines, offered a reward of $1 million (£615,000) for information about the infidelities of members of Congress. He says he is preparing to divulge new sleazy details as the trial of Mr Clinton in the Senate goes on. Last year Bob Livingston, the incoming Speaker of the House, resigned as Mr Flynt's investigators were gathering information on his extramarital affairs.

The pornographer, who treated his right to print hard-core pornography as a First Amendment crusade and was immortalised for doing so in the film *The People Versus Larry Flynt*, denied that he has had any co-operation in his muck-raking from the White House.

But Jim Nicholson, chairman of the Republican National Congress, demanded that President Clinton call off his "attack dogs" and "end the tactics of sexual terrorism and put your buddy, Larry Flynt, back in the plain brown paper wrapper where he belongs".

Mr Barr and the 12 other members of the House Judiciary Committee were busy yesterday writing the opening prosecution arguments which will begin when the trial starts in earnest tomorrow.

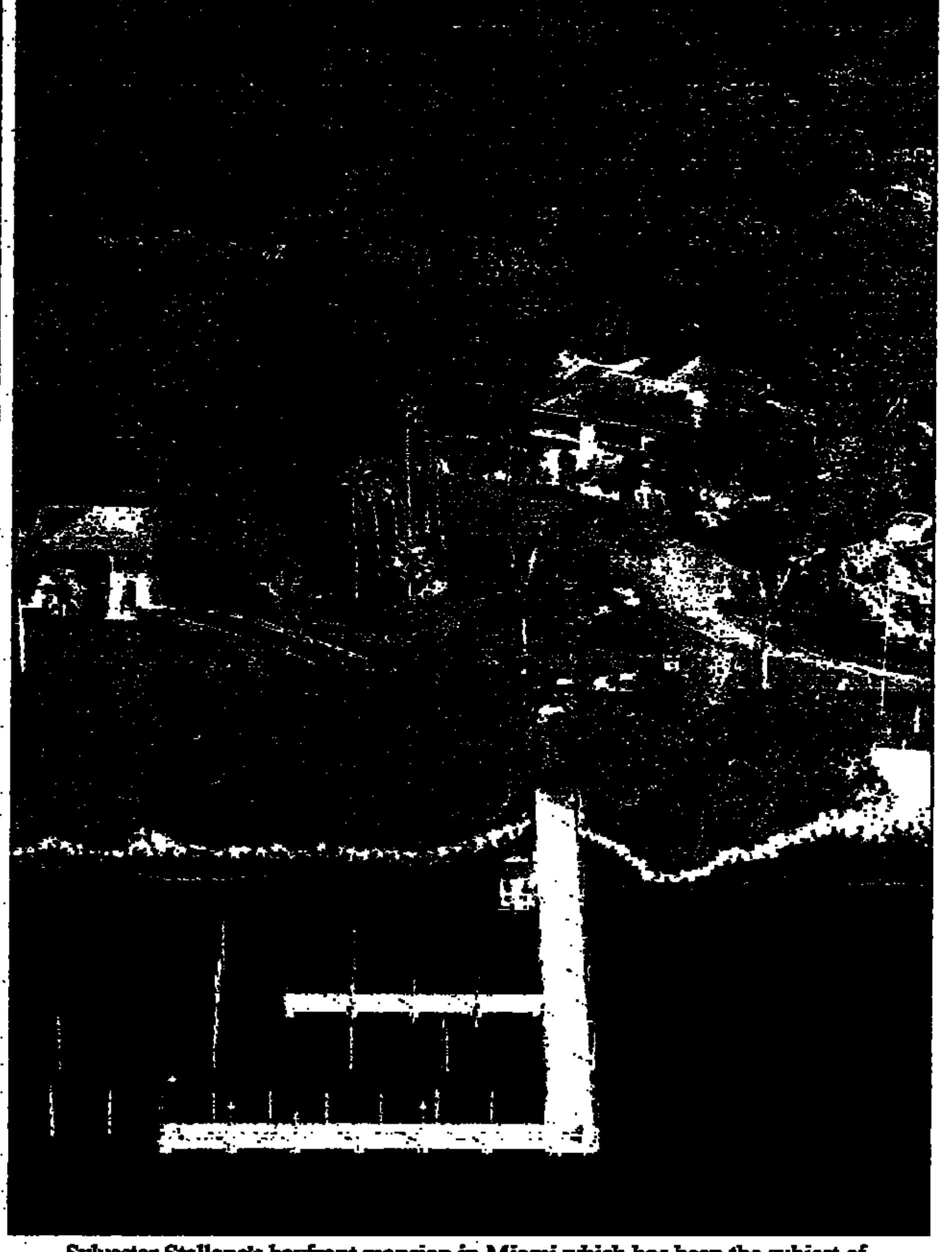
The House has 24 hours to make its case and the White House has an equal time to respond. Only then will the issue of whether or not to call witnesses, including Ms Lewinsky, be debated.

Mr Clinton is accused of committing perjury by giving a false account of his relationship with Ms Lewinsky to the Grand Jury last summer and obstructing justice in his attempts to cover it up.

Joe Lockhart, the White House spokesman, yesterday attacked the 105-page legal brief submitted by the House prosecutors in which they outlined how they would show that seemingly innocent events "may well take on a sinister, or even criminal, connotation when observed in the context of the whole plot". Mr Lockhart said: "The hallmark of a weak case is hyperbole and overblown rhetoric. It reads like a cheap mystery."

A new poll yesterday by *USA Today* and CNN showed that 79 per cent of Americans thought Mr Clinton had committed perjury and 53 per cent believed he had obstructed justice. But majorities in both cases thought the crimes did not warrant his removal from office. His job approval rating remained high, at 67 per cent.

Bronwen Maddox, page 18


LOU TOMAN / SUN-SENTINEL

Sylvester Stallone's bayfront mansion in Miami which has been the subject of a $27.5 million offer by lawyers acting on behalf of a dog named Gunther

Millionaires' Miami going to the dogs

FROM DAVID ADAMS IN MIAMI

AGENTS for the actor Sylvester Stallone, who owns a luxurious waterfront villa in one of Miami's plushest neighbourhoods, are considering a bizarre offer from the handlers of a German shepherd dog which inherited $65 million (£40 million) from a German countess.

The dog — Gunther IV — inherited the money through its father, Gunther III, which performed with a popular German disco dance troupe, the Gunther Group. His bark was so endearing that Countess Karlotta Liebenstein left him her fortune in 1992.

Gunther III also died, and the fortune — now estimated at $200 million — passed to Gunther IV. The money is in the safekeeping of the Gunther Corp, an offshore holding company in the Bahamas and is administered by lawyers entrusted with looking after Gunther IV's every need — including suitable accomodation and a bodyguard — as well as promoting music, sports and scientific research.

"Our clients were very impressed by the elegance of the home, and are therefore evaluating the prospect of becoming active purchasers," they wrote in a letter to Wimbush-Riteway Realty, the Miami estate agent handling the sale of Mr Stallone's 11-acre property in the Coconut Grove district. When he bought it in 1994 the $8 million price tag was the highest ever paid for a southern Florida home.


Dog's life: Gunther IV

Mr Stallone recently decided to sell the home after complaining that his privacy was being interrupted by tourists. The asking price is $27.5 million (£17 million). Mr Stallone is reportedly moving closer to Hollywood — with his wife and their labrador, Flipper — where he has bought a $10 million home in Beverly Hills.

But Gunther IV is facing competition for the house. A group of investors has already offered Mr Stallone $24.7 million, and plans to build a luxury hotel on the site. However, local homeowners do not like the idea of their quiet streets becoming a commercial thoroughfare, and the hotel project may not be approved.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Beijing crackdown irks Washington

Washington: America told China yesterday that it was "very disturbed" at the recent crackdown on Chinese dissidents and said the Asian nation would benefit if its people could take part freely in public life. The crackdown, aimed at advocates of a multiparty system, could spoil a visit to Washington in April by Zhu Rongji, the Chinese Prime Minister, an American official added.

The meeting in Washington was part of the first human rights talks between the two countries for four years. Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, said: "We believe that it is very important for a country such as China, which has great responsibilities and is a hugely important country, to be able to benefit by the free participation of all its people." *(Reuters)*

Green film protest fails

Bangkok: A judge has refused to issue an injunction to stop the production of a Leonardo DiCaprio film in a national park conservation area on a southern Thai island. Environmentalists, residents and hotel and tour operators have opposed plans by Twentieth Century Fox to film *The Beach* on the Phi Phi Islands in Krabi province. The film crew has removed natural vegetation from Maya Beach in the islands and planted 93 coconut trees, which the protesters say will permanently damage the ecosystem. *(AP)*

Spirit of Stalin returns

Moscow: A grandson of Stalin has launched a movement aimed at ousting President Yeltsin. Colonel Yevgeni Dzhugashvili yesterday joined a group of leftists to found a new political bloc whose aims are the restoration of the Soviet Union and the removal of the post of President of Russia. Dzhugashvili was the name of Stalin before he succumbed to the Bolshevik fashion for pseudonyms. Colonel Dzhugashvili used one of his grandfather's phrases to call Mr Yeltsin "an enemy of the people". *(AFP)*

Net losses for business

Singapore: The Internet will destroy many businesses and The News Corporation, parent company of *The Times*, will not rush into the increasingly expensive sector, the group's chairman and chief executive, Rupert Murdoch, said yesterday. While confident of the future of traditional media, he told a broadcast industry group: "The Internet will destroy more businesses than it will create in the sense that it will wipe out the middlemen." *(Reuters)*

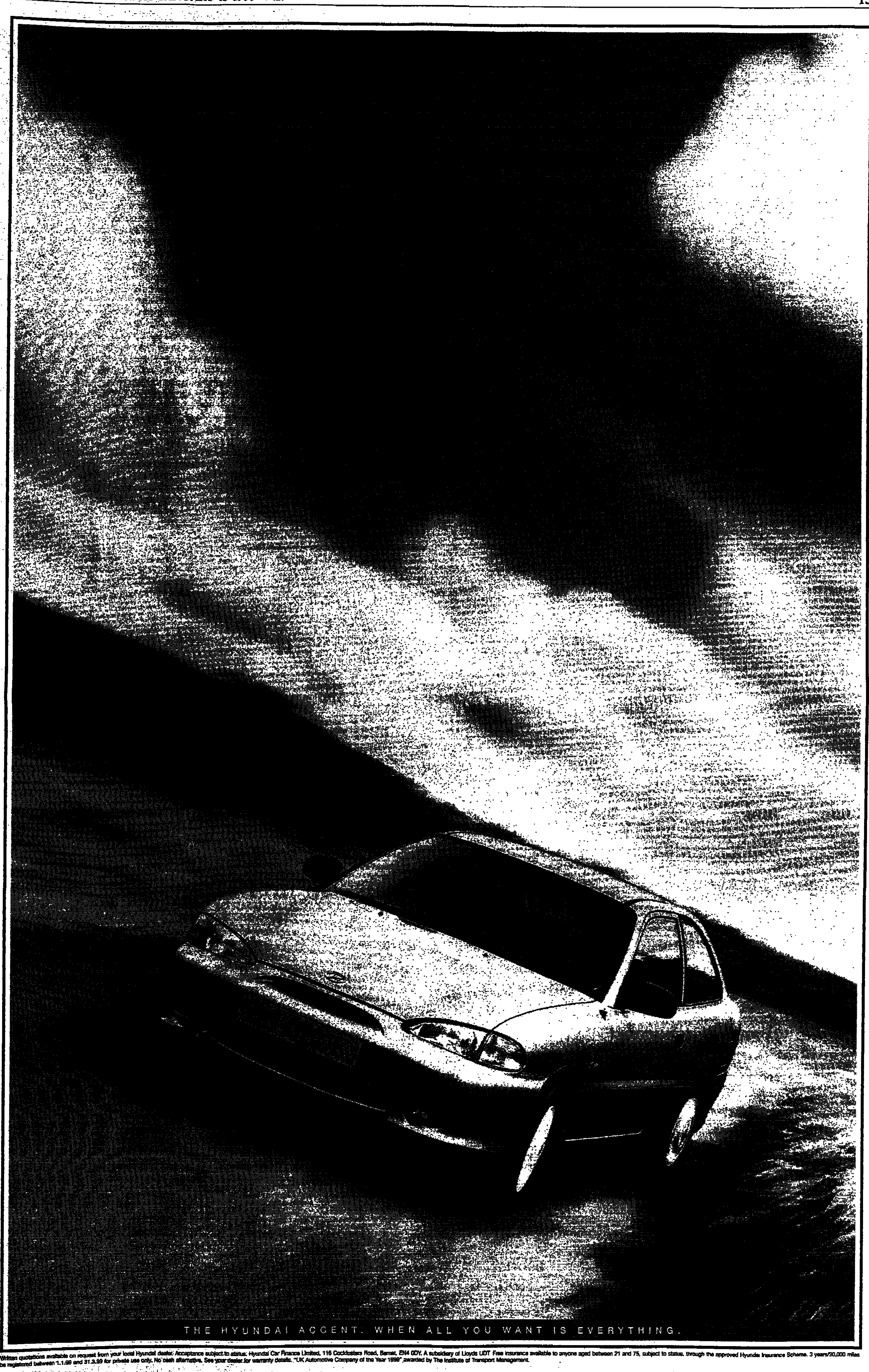
Hindus burn church

Delhi: Hindu zealots attacked a church in western India just hours after Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Prime Minister, visited the area to try to halt a wave of violence against Christians. The church in the Dangs district of Gujarat state was set alight, Father Dominique Emmanuel of the Catholic Conference of Bishops said. Six churches and missionary schools in Gujarat were torched by Hindu extremists during the Christmas period. *(AFP)*

Fax of life

Perth: Australians besotted with their jobs rather than their partners have been urged to turn off their faxes and turn on their lovers. Young couples were being affected by Tins (Two Incomes, No Sex), Dr Denis Cherry, of the Perth Human Sexuality Centre, said." He advised couples fearing they were heading down the slippery Tins slope to escape on a romantic holiday. *(AFP)*

هكذا من الأصل


THE HYUNDAI ACCENT. WHEN ALL YOU WANT IS EVERYTHING.

GUINEA
Conakry
Makeni
Freetown
SIERRA LEONE
LIBERIA
Atlantic Ocean
50 miles

Nation's natural wealth wasted

By Michael Dynes

EVER since diamonds were discovered in Sierra Leone by the British Geological Survey in 1930, the industry has been cursed by an inability to prevent anyone from digging them out of the ground.

The country's diamonds are dispersed over such vast areas that it has been impossible for national authorities to prevent freelance operators from mining them for sale on the black market.

One of the world's great diamond producers has been virtually wiped out as a result, but the prospect of vast wealth continues to excite interest in the country's natural resources among legitimate and illegitimate business interests.

The Sierra Leone Selection Trust, a British firm, began commercial mining on a small scale in 1934. After it teamed up a few years later with De Beers, the global diamond giant, the industry grew rapidly. By the 1950s Sierra Leone was one of the world's most important sources of gem-quality diamonds.

But things soon began to fall apart. "The Sierra Leone Selection Trust couldn't control the source," Andy Lamont, a De Beers spokesman, said. "Diamonds started appearing on the market from locals. As small operators got involved, the big firms lost control. That's the story of diamond mining in Sierra Leone."

Attempts were made to buy the illicitly mined diamonds, but it was impossible to stem the growing tide of freelance operators and prevent the loss of revenue for the Government, Mr Lamont added.

Corruption, mismanagement and greed destroyed Sierra Leone's diamond industry, and deprived the Government of vast revenues. De Beers pulled out in 1985 because of the deteriorating political climate. Today the country produces 150,000 carats a year compared with 20 million from Botswana.

Freetown staff had 'a secret channel to Cook'

From Sam Kiley in Freetown

THE findings of the report by Sir Thomas Legg, QC, into the Sandline affair — which blamed Foreign Office officials for failing to brief Robin Cook about allegedly illegal arms shipments by the British security company to the elected Freetown Government of President Kabbah last year — have been undermined. Investigations by *The Times* have revealed that briefings were sent by the officials through secret German communications.

It appears that Peter Penfold, British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, and other officials were given access to encoded German communications equipment to transmit details of the arms supplies, and activities by a handful of South African mercenaries flying a helicopter in support of West African peacekeepers fighting rebels in the former British colony, with the approval of the German and British Governments and their secret services.

When the Sandline affair was exposed last year, the company had tabled a proposal to send more mercenaries to Sierra Leone to support West African peacekeepers. "When the British Government says that it did not know, it is quite simply not telling the truth. Not only were communications supplied by the Germans, but these briefings would have ended up on the top of the relevant minister's papers in the morning in Bonn as well as London," said a Western intelligence source.

Mr Cook and Tony Lloyd, the Foreign Office Minister responsible for Africa, told the Legg inquiry and parliamentary committees investigating the affair that they were not informed of support for the plans to send arms and mercenaries to Sierra Leone.

Mr Penfold was criticised last year by Sir Thomas, former Permanent Secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department, for having failed to keep his masters in London fully informed.

Sir Thomas's report also said that the British diplomats working in Conakry in Guinea, in "exile" from Freetown, were unable to send secure messages back to London, and that this accounted for a breakdown in communications. The explanation raised some amusement among British diplomats at the time, who pointed out that a Queen's Messenger carrying a diplomatic bag would have been perfectly secure.

But use of the secure German communications channels not only shows the high level of clearance given to the backing for Sandline's negotiations, but also implies that the secret method of communication was kept from Sir Thomas and parliamentarians involved in the later investigations.

"The British were able to use the German channels whenever they wanted. This went on for several weeks and had to have had clearance at the highest levels.

"Even allies are reluctant to allow one another to use their equipment. This was a unique set-up and strongly implies that other members of the European Union — who often share their intelligence — were, at the very least, aware of what British diplomats were talking about with Sandline, even if they did not approve. It is absurd to, therefore, suggest that ministers in Bonn knew, but that Cook and company did not," said the Western agent.

'When the Government says it did not know, it is not telling the truth'



West African peacekeepers search a Sierra Leone civilian suspected of being a rebel in Freetown, where the battle to control the capital continues

□ **Abidjan:** Sierra Leone's rebel leader, Foday Sankoh, was flown to neighbouring Guinea yesterday for talks about ending the fighting in Freetown, diplomats said.

"He is here in Conakry and is in negotiations," Ali Kamara, Sierra Leone's Ambassador to Guinea, said. He added that Mr Sankoh, leader of the rebel Revolutionary United Front, had been flown to the Guinean capital with West African mediators and was in talks with the Foreign Ministers of Guinea, Sierra Leone, Togo and Ivory Coast. Also there was Francis Okelo, a senior United Nations official.

Mr Sankoh's fighters captured eastern and central districts of Freetown on January 6. He has been detained for two years by President Kabbah and his military backers — the Nigerian-led West African force Ecomog. *(Reuters)*



Penfold: Criticised for not keeping London informed

Cape Muslims threaten to avenge death

From R.W. Johnson in Johannesburg

BOTH the South African Government and Muslim groups moved rapidly yesterday to defuse tension after the death of Yusuf Jacobs, the protester hit in the head by a police plastic bullet during a demonstration against last week's visit by Tony Blair.

Earlier, Salie Abadah, head of security for a Muslim vigilante group, had threatened that it would "make South Africa ungovernable", should Mr Jacobs die. Given the group's violent record and the parlous state of public order in Cape Town's Muslim community — last year saw about 600 terrorist incidents, including the explosion of 70 pipe bombs — this threat was being taken seriously by the police.

Mr Jacobs was shot during a protest by a pro-Iraqi group in the Cape calling itself Muslims Against Global Oppression. Mr Abadah, of the vigilante group People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (Pagad), said yesterday that Mr Jacobs was also a member of Pagad, the first time a direct links between the two groups had been made.

It seemed, however, that the Government had struck a deal with Pagad. Azhar Cachalia, the Security Secretary and one of numerous Muslims in the ANC Government, announced that President Mandela will set up an inquest into Mr Jacobs's death.

Pagad spokesmen, meanwhile, said that a planned protest march after Mr Jacobs's funeral had been cancelled, and announced that they wanted to sit down with "good policemen" to discuss the affair.

The police, for their part, continued to insist that they fired on the demonstrators only after they saw them reaching for guns from a passing vehicle. The police also announced that they believe links exist between a car bomb attack at Cape Town's Waterfront development, which injured three people on New Year's Day, and the bomb attack in August, also at the Waterfront, which killed two people at a Planet Hollywood restaurant.

Earlier, there was a pipe-bomb attack on a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet in Cape Town. The chain is seen by Muslim extremists as a symbol of US consumer culture and it has told franchise-holders to step up security.

Most South Africans are bemused by the continuous rumble coming from Cape Town's 360,000-strong Muslim community and by the prominence which Islam has assumed in South Africa since 1994. Fewer than 2 per cent of the population are Muslim, but there are three Muslims in the Cabinet. Among Africans there is much resentful talk of "Mandela's Indians" and a general expectation that Thabo Mbeki, once he takes over as President, will move to cut back sharply their numbers in government.

Jakes Gerwel, the Cabinet Secretary, who is also the director-general of President Mandela's Office, is to travel to Libya to intercede with Colonel Gaddafi to surrender the two Lockerbie bomb suspects. The initiative, a direct result of Mr Blair's visit, seeks to exploit the special relationship between Mr Mandela and Colonel Gadaffi.

Ironically, the Government's links with Libya may also provide Pretoria with leverage in dealing with its Muslim extremists. The fact that the Cape Town bombings came so soon after the bombing of the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania last August has led most to assume that the Cape Town terrorists are acting at the behest of anti-American groups in the Arab world. If so, few are better placed than Colonel Gaddafi to exercise a restraining hand.

Harare editor held over 'revolt' report

From Jan Raath in Harare

MILITARY police yesterday arrested the Editor of a Zimbabwean newspaper after it reported that the authorities had arrested 23 soldiers for urging their comrades to rebel against President Mugabe.

Mark Chavunduka, 34, Editor of *The Standard*, was still at Cranborne military barracks last night in the custody of the Army's special investigations branch. His lawyers were refused access. Clive Wilson, *The Standard's* proprietor, said an application for his release would be made to the High Court today.

Military and secret police also interrogated another journalist at the newspaper's offices yesterday. They threatened to use "other avenues of extracting information" when he refused to give them further information.

Earlier, Moven Mahachi, the Defence Minister, delivered an enraged attack on the country's independent press. He denounced as "treasonable" a series of critical reports about Zimbabwe's military operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo aimed at preventing President Kabila's overthrow by Tutsi rebels.

Mr Mahachi denied *The Standard's* report of the 23 arrests.

Michael Jordan set to retire

From Giles Whittell in Los Angeles

MICHAEL JORDAN, by common consent the greatest player in the history of basketball, is expected to announce his retirement this week after a record-breaking career that drew millions to his sport and billions to his backers.

Jordan, 35, who led the Chicago Bulls to six national championship titles and earned more than $60 million (£36 million) in the past two years, excluding endorsement deals, will hang up his trademark black boots rather than play out a basketball season truncated by a bitter dispute between management and players, officials said.

Bald, 6ft 6in tall, and unmatched in his athleticism and will to win, Jordan singlehandedly made basketball the most lucrative professional sport in America, pumping an estimated $10 billion into the national economy over 13 seasons. Unlike many fellow stars, he provided the game with some of its most memorable moments without developing an arrogance to match, shrugging off controversy about a costly gambling habit to become, in one poll, one of Americans' "most respected newsmakers" along with Mother Teresa, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King.

Jordan averaged 31.5 points a game over the course of his career, making him the National Basketball Association's Most Valuable Player a record five times. Cliffhangers were his speciality. He snatched the winning points in the final seconds in 26 NBA games.

Simon Barnes, page 40

New skirmish in no-fly zone as Britain turns for help to Iran

From Ian Brodie in Washington and Michael Theodoulou in Nicosia

AMID growing tension in the Gulf an American F16 fighter fired on an Iraqi radar site in the northern no-fly zone yesterday, the sixth skirmish since the end of Operation Desert Fox more than three weeks ago.

The latest action came as William Cohen, the US Secretary of Defence, claimed that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's new refusal to recognise no-fly zones demonstrated that he was becoming increasingly "frantic and agitated".

In response to the deepening crisis, a senior British official will today hold talks with leaders in Iran, which said it was working towards a peaceful solution. Derek Plumbley will be the most senior Foreign Office official to visit Iran since the Islamic Republic distanced itself from the fatwa against Salman Rushdie last September.

"Iran is an important regional player and a valid interlocutor on Iraq," a Foreign Office spokesman said. Mr Plumbley, the Foreign Office director for the Middle East and North Africa, will also discuss other bilateral issues during his two-day visit.

Mr Plumbley's trip follows continued efforts by Iraq to improve relations with its former Gulf enemy. Iraq told a visiting Iranian envoy yesterday that it was keen to boost ties and formally invited Vice-President Hassan Habibi to Baghdad for talks.

The US Secretary of Defence, visiting Japan, said Saddam appeared to be increasingly cornered since the end of the cruise missile and bombing raids by America and Britain.

Mr Cohen claimed that the four days of attacks in December were "one of the most successful" military operations ever carried out and as a result Saddam was now "starting to act up".

"He is lashing out verbally, rhetorically, against the Saudis, against the Egyptians, against the Kuwaitis," Mr Cohen said. He vowed that America would give no ground in enforcing the no-fly zone restrictions and warned that Saddam's forces would pay a penalty for continuing to attack or lock on to US and British aircraft with radar beams.

In yesterday's fracas, an F16 fired a missile at a radar site near the city of Mosul in northern Iraq and returned safely to its base in Turkey. The American pilot had picked up a signal from an early-warning radar that was considered a threat.

With tempers running high, America is boosting its air power over southern Iraq with eight additional F16s and four aerial tankers, bringing its aircraft in the region to 200. In addition, Kuwait has put part of its military on full, combat-ready alert in response to Iraqi "threats" to Gulf Arab states.

Against this backdrop, Iran has emerged as a potentially valuable regional mediator. Hours before the Iranian envoy, Mohammed Reza Sadr, met senior Iraqi officials yesterday, Iran's Foreign Ministry chided Baghdad for apparently renewing its territorial claim to Kuwait. It added that Mr Sadr would visit "other regional countries" with a view to resolving the crisis through diplomatic means. Tehran has condemned last month's allied airstrikes and frequently expresses sympathy for ordinary Iraqis, but it has also urged Baghdad to respect United Nations Security Council resolutions, particularly on disarmament.



Cohen: speaking of Iraq in Japan yesterday

Iran was on the receiving end of Iraqi chemical weapons attacks during their eight-year war. Iranian officials have also blamed Saddam for giving America the pretext to boost its military presence in the Gulf.

The Pentagon, meanwhile, is claiming that damage caused by Operation Desert Fox was more severe than initially reported. Unconfirmed intelligence reports suggested that the raids had killed 600 to 1,600 members of Saddam's Republican Guard, according to General Hugh Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Earlier, senior American officers had deliberately avoided such ambiguous "body counts", a practice that contributed hugely to a credibility gap before the war in Vietnam was lost.

As evidence of anti-Saddam discord in the southern no-fly zone, the US State Department said "opposition sources" had ascertained that summary executions of suspect military officers and dissident civilians had reached nearly 500 in the past two months. Among the victims were the commanding general and senior staff officers of the 11th Mechanised Division.

But while Saddam may seem increasingly isolated, so too are Britain and the US at the Security Council in wanting to maintain both military pressure and sanctions against Iraq. There are concerns in Washington that the three other permanent members — Russia, China and France — will find support for a softer approach towards Iraq from four countries that have just become council members: Malaysia, Namibia, Canada and the Netherlands.

The political battle also involves the future, if any, for Unscom, the weapons inspectorate. Its chairman, Richard Butler, insisted that it was "not dead" even though his inspectors have all been expelled by Baghdad and he has suspended flights by American U2 spy planes over Iraq.

The security council's search for a less intrusive role for Unscom could lead to the departure of Mr Butler, whose dismissal was again demanded by Russia.

Jerusalem hunt for serial killer

By Christopher Walker in Jerusalem

THE Israeli Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, gave a warning yesterday that a would-be Jewish serial murderer had been in action again in Jerusalem after an Arab in his fifties was knifed near the ultra-Orthodox Jewish district of Mea Shearim.

Mr Netanyahu said that the police were actively pursuing the assailant, who might have been responsible for eight previous stabbings since November 1997, two of them fatal and all following roughly the same pattern.

The latest attack came less than 24 hours after police had ordered extra security precautions around the Wailing Wall, Judaism's most sacred site, in reaction to threats of a grenade attack against Jewish worshippers by Islamic extremists.

Israel radio reported that the 57-year-old victim was stabbed near Mea Shearim at about 5.30am as he was on his way to work.

Last month an Arab man who was also on his way to work was stabbed with a knife whose markings led the police to suspect a Jewish extremist.

"It looks like the same serial murderer that we are looking for. I still cannot say this definitively, but that is the way it appears," Mr Netanyahu said as the investigation continued.

Yair Yitzhaki, Jerusalem's police commander, cited the district, the time of the attack, and the single knife wound as elements that made the latest attack similar to the previous ones.

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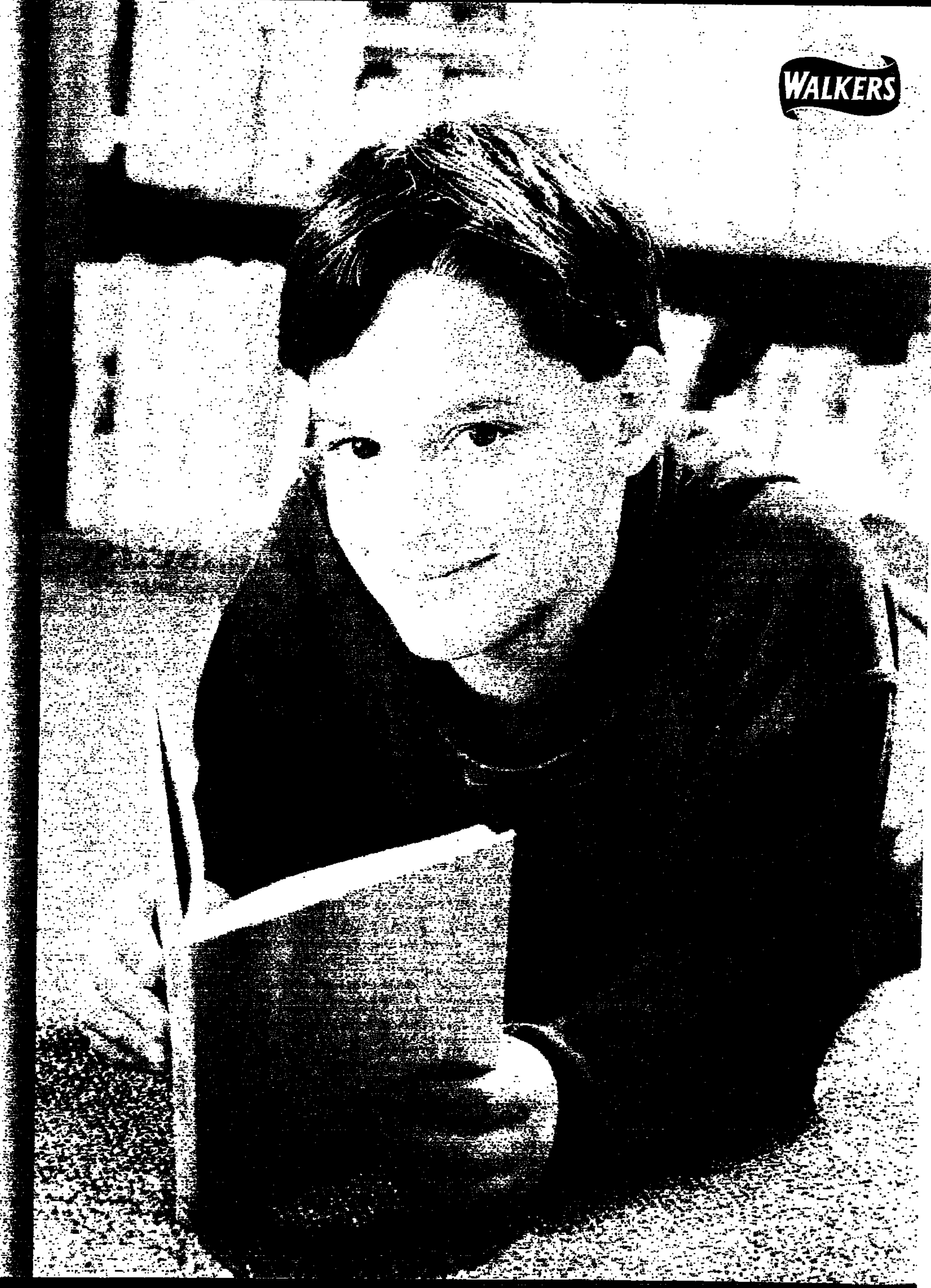
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CHANGING TIMES

What happens if the bugs take over?

The first speaker in our Scientists for the New Century lecture series explains how antibiotics are losing the war against deadly bacteria.

Interview by **Anjana Ahuja**



Dr Martin Westwell: "If we go back to a time when antibiotics are useless, and people have to go into hospital because they have an infection, the NHS will go under"

Several years ago, a rash of books pronouncing medical doom appeared. With provocative titles such as *The Coming Plague*, they foresaw an apocalyptic future where superbugs would reign supreme with antibiotics powerless to stop them.

Some experts viewed these predictions as scaremongering. Others, including Dr Martin Westwell, a young scientist from Oxford University who has been studying the structure of antibiotics, thought these nightmarish visions were disturbingly plausible. "In 1963, the Surgeon-General in America said it was time to close the book on infectious disease," Dr Westwell says. "But now we have Lords select committees discussing strategies to combat infections because drug-resistant bacteria is such a massive problem."

As Dr Westwell will reveal on January 27 at London's Royal Institution in the opening lecture of the Scientists for the New Century series, sponsored by *The Times*, bacteria that are resistant to all known antibiotics have begun to emerge.

"In the late Eighties, it was shown that bacteria could gain resistance to Vancomycin, which is sometimes called the antibiotic of last resort," the 27-year-old chemist recalls. "Then a few years later, one case popped up in Japan and two in America. There was nothing that doctors could do for them except give them lots of antibiotics in the hope that they might help the patient's immune system to recover."

The immune system of those patients managed to outwit the bacterial invaders and, fortunately, no more cases have been reported. But scientists know that it could be just a matter of time. Once an antibiotic is introduced, it typically takes only a few years for a bacterium to acquire resistance to it.

"It isn't overdramatic to say we are on the edge of an apocalypse," Dr Westwell says in his gentle Wigan accent. "If these bugs get a foothold in hospitals, we are going to be defenceless in the war against infection. At the moment, large hospitals employ doctors and nurses to keep tabs on what is going on, to make sure the bugs don't take over. For example, if the virulent MRSA (methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus) bug is found, wards are closed and everyone is isolated until the infection is cleared. But smaller hospitals and nursing homes don't always have such measures in place, so there is always a risk of bugs getting out. We could go over the precipice at any time."

That, Dr Westwell says, would be an absolute disaster for the NHS. "The NHS was saved by antibiotics because people could just go and get medicine from their doctor instead of going into hospital," he explains.

"We've just seen the flu crisis, which shows how stretched everything is. If we go back to a time when antibiotics are useless, and people have to go into hospital because they have an infection, the NHS will go under."

However, there is hope on the horizon in the shape of LY333328, a compound found in the soils of Borneo which is being tested by the Eli Lilly pharmaceutical company. It appears capable of exterminating the bugs that the most potent current antibiotics — Vancomycin included — cannot kill.

Meanwhile, Dr Westwell, who holds a Glaxo junior research fellowship in biological and medicinal sciences, is one of many scientists who hope to design molecules that can combat the superbugs. To design such drugs though, experts must deduce exactly how antibiotics extinguish harmful bacteria. Yet, despite the importance of these drugs, fundamental knowledge of how they go about their business is surprisingly hazy.

This is one reason why Dr Westwell accepted the fellowship at Oxford rather than a position at Harvard University. He sets his own research agenda, which allows him much greater independence. The alternatives are working under the guidance of a senior scientist and so restricting his area of study, or seeking funding from a government research organisation — such as the Engineering and Physical Research Sciences Council or the Biological and Research Sciences Council — which rarely allocates money for very basic science.

Moreover, it is almost impossible for relative novices with no track record to obtain money. The usual practice is for a young scientist to apply in the name of a senior member of a department; sadly, resulting success is not always credited to the right person.

Like many other talented young researchers trying to make a name for themselves, Dr Westwell finds the system frustrating: "I have no individual track record, so I would find it hard to get funding, but how do you get a track record in the first place if nobody funds you?"

Promise is no guarantee. Dr Westwell says he has seen top-rated research proposals fall by the wayside because there isn't enough money to go around. The result, he says, is a "do or die" culture in the higher echelons of science: "To survive, you really have to be at the top of your field."

He is making a sacrifice for his independence — although bearing the prestigious Glaxo name, his fellowship pays less than a standard research position. These jobs are modestly remunerated; a 25-year-old researcher who has just attained a PhD can expect a starting salary at a university of about £16,000.

Dr. Westwell's wife Valerie works as a mathematics teacher to boost the family income (they have a one-year-old son, Charlie). Supporting a family and paying a mortgage would be no problem on an industry salary, he says, but he will stick with universities because an academic career offers more intellectual freedom. He hopes to become a lecturer within five years and top up his salary by taking commercial advantage of his research.

The Times's sponsorship of the Scientists for the New Century lectures reflects growing concerns that, even though they conduct work that could have an enormous impact on our lives, the contributions of young scientists are not always recognised. This is also reflected in their social status.

"To be considered a cultured person, you have to know about the arts and about music and books," Dr Westwell says. "I think that to be a fully rounded person, you should be able to read science articles in the newspaper and be able to talk about it, have an opinion on it. Science doesn't have to be highfalutin. It should be accessible to everybody."

Shedding new light on an eye disease



SCIENCE BRIEFING

Nigel Hawkes

For the first time a treatment has been developed that can slow down or halt the progress of macular degeneration, the most common cause of blindness in the elderly. The condition affects 16,000 people a year in Britain, and Simon Harding, consultant ophthalmic surgeon at St Paul's Eye Unit of the Royal Liverpool University Hospital, says that the new treatment will offer "some significant benefit" to a third of new cases.

It uses photodynamic therapy in which a drug injected into the body is activated when it reaches the site of a disease by shining light on it. The Liverpool unit has been part of a study of 609 patients at 22 centres in America and Europe, from which the first year's results have emerged. They show that treated patients are a third more likely to retain stable or improved vision than those treated with a placebo.

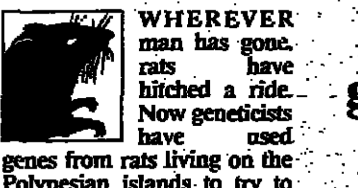
Macular degeneration affects about a tenth of people over the age of 65. In its most severe, "wet" form, it causes rapid deterioration of vision and most sufferers are registered blind within two years. Some vision survives, but it becomes impossible to read, drive or watch TV.

Some patients can be helped by laser treatments, but the great majority cannot. The new treatment has been developed by QLT Phototherapeutics, of Vancouver, Canada, and Ciba Vision Corporation, a division of the Novartis drug giant, which have applied for licences in America, Europe and Canada. It helps only newly diagnosed cases, not those who have already lost vision. Patients are first injected with a light-sensitive dye, called Visudyne, by infusing it into a vein. The process takes ten minutes, and then patients wait a further five minutes for the dye to be picked up by molecules in the blood called lipoproteins and circulated throughout the body.

The second stage involves shining a laser into the eye to activate the dye. The cause of the wet form of macular degeneration is the proliferation of new blood vessels in the retina, the light-sensitive part of the eye. Fluid leaking from these vessels robs the eye of its precise vision. The effect of shining red light into the eye is to activate the dye, producing highly reactive oxygen radicals which seal off the blood vessels, preventing leakage and damage. The laser does not produce any heat, so does not damage other parts of the retina. Side-effects are virtually non-existent, says Mr Harding — only a few cases of back pain and tenderness at the site of injection. After treatment the patients have to wear dark glasses for 24 hours.

The results show that in 61.4 per cent of those treated with Visudyne, vision was stable or improved, compared with 45.9 per cent of those treated with dummy injections. This means that the treated group were 34 per cent more likely to retain their vision. "This may not seem a huge difference, but if you or I had the condition we would jump at it," says Mr Harding. He expects the treatment to become widely available within the next year, subject to licensing approval, and is organising courses at Liverpool to train ophthalmic surgeons to do it.

Rats show glimpse of the past



WHEREVER man has gone, rats have hitched a ride. Now geneticists have used genes from rats living on the Polynesian islands to try to trace the history of human migration there. Linguistic and archaeological evidence has already provided strong hints of how human beings spread through the region 3,500 years ago. But confirming this by studying human DNA is a problem because indigenous populations fell victim to European diseases at the end of the 19th century. That makes it difficult to be sure that DNA from modern Polynesians is representative of the original population.

Rats suffered no such setbacks, so Dr Lisa Matisoo-Smith, at the University of Aukland, looked at them. She studied a section of mitochondrial DNA, the sort that is passed down the maternal line unchanged and mutates at a steady rate, providing an evolutionary clock. Rat DNA mutates more quickly than human DNA, so there has been plenty of time for separate lineages to develop in Polynesia.

The results, reports *Science Now*, confirm earlier suggestions that the Southern Cook and Society Islands formed the focus from which migration to other islands began. "This is clear evidence that people were moving about quite a lot," she says. An exception is found on Chatham Island, whose rats belong to a single related group, suggesting that this island was isolated from the rest.

Dr Patrick Kirch, an anthropologist from the University of California at Berkeley, says: "It's nice to have confirmation of the work in archaeology and linguistics."

TB or not TB, that is a question answered



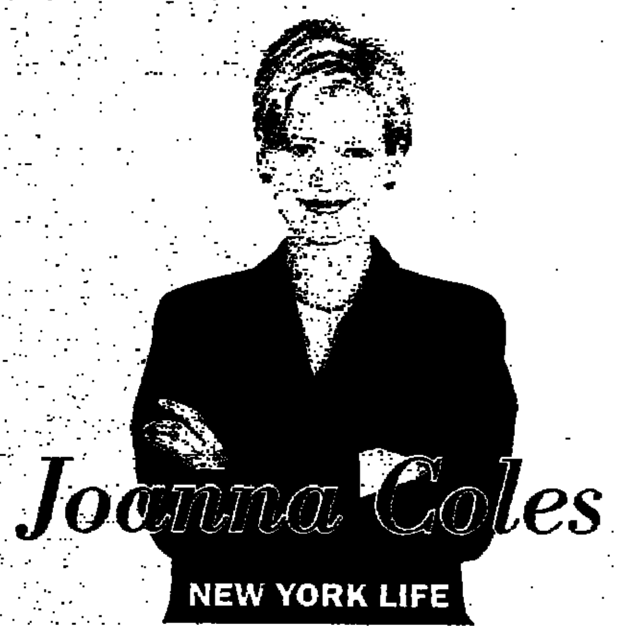
THE creation of the new International Centre for Life in Newcastle has provided an opportunity for investigating death. The centre is being built on the site of the old Newcastle Infirmary, immortalised in the Geordie anthem *Blaydon Races*, where many victims of tuberculosis were buried.

Infirmary records suggest that 27.1 per cent of those who died there and were interred in the burial ground between 1753 and 1845 suffered from TB.

But how reliable were the diagnoses? A team led by Dr Angela Gernaey and Dr David Minnikin, of the University of Newcastle, examined bones from 210 skeletons which were recovered during excavation for the new foundations and tested them for mycolic acids — long-chain lipids that are "markers" of TB infection, which is caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. They wore gloves and masks in case any of the bacteria were still infectious.

The team reports in *Internet Archaeology* — an online journal to be found at http://www.intarch.ac.uk — that 24 per cent of the ribs from the burial ground tested positive for mycolic acid, a nice corroboration of the records. DNA has also been used to detect TB in ancient bones, but the team believes that mycolic acid may be a more reliable marker. Since tuberculosis is strongly linked to poverty, the test may also be useful for assessing how wealthy, and how well-fed, our ancestors really were.

Dig that dancing queen? She's about to give birth



Saturday: "Now," bellows Sigrid, our matronly Scandinavian birthing instructor, "this weekend course is specially designed for Manhattan couples with impossible schedules. I will try to squeeze in what would normally take a whole week of evening classes." She passes round badges with our first names filled out and a blank space in which she instructs us to write in our hobbies, "so you can get to know each other over lunch".

Peter fills out our badges. "What shall I say your hobby is?" he asks. "Oh, I don't know. I don't really have a hobby," I say, irritably. He writes "reading pregnancy manuals". On his own badge, he writes "watching television". The woman sitting next to us earnestly writes down "running marathons".

"Now let's have some dancing," shouts Sigrid, hunching over her boombox. "I am Swedish, so we will have Abba." The stuffy room on the 11th floor of St Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital is soon resonating to *"You can dance/ You can jive/ Having the time of your life/ See that girl/ Watch that scene/ Digging the dancing queen . . ."*

"Up, up," shouts Sigrid, pulling us out of our chairs to lumber around the room, feeling ludicrous and not digging the dancing queen one bit.

"Splendid, let's get the circulation going." She swings her arms like a Canadian Air Force instructor.

It is 9.30am and I am already birth classed-out. You cannot have a baby in Manhattan without being bullied into attending dozens of these classes. Maternity tours, interviews with obstetricians, prenatal and maternal fitness classes, I have obediently attended them all. We even spent one Friday evening at a St Luke's film night, watching programmes of births going wrong to prepare us for the possibility of a Caesarean section. And now one of our precious weekends is to be spent on a weekend crammer course with four pregnant couples whom we have never met and a fierce Swedish matron in a ginger pantsuit.

To be fair, the four other couples with "impossible schedules" look similarly fed up. One of the putative fathers, Bill, a biochemist (hobby: sports) has already positioned *himself* at the back of the group so he can secretly tune in to the football playoffs on his Walkman, much to his wife's embarrassment.

"I normally wear a button saying Birth is Normal, but this suit has just been drycleaned so I forgot," announces Sigrid. "Banana, anyone?"

As Abba fades out, she divides us into two groups by gender and asks us to construct lists of best and worst things about having a child.

"Not being able to tie your shoes up," suggests Anna-Marie, the marathon runner and also, it turns out, a chemistry professor.

"Pressure at work," says Susan grimly. "I'm an attorney. I'm due in two weeks, I'm in the office by 9am and I'm not home until 8pm." She looks grey with exhaustion. "I get four weeks paid maternity leave and that's considered good, for a lawyer."

The worst list fills up quickly: pain, lack of freedom, financial worries, family tensions. But apart from the baby itself, we have few suggestions for the best list. "Well, it stops you being so self-obsessed," I offer finally.

"But is that a *good* thing, I wonder?" asks the lawyer.

After ten minutes the men shuffle back in and, under Sigrid's instruction, we compare lists. Although our worst lists are almost identical, the men's best list is much more optimistic and includes "everything changes; becoming a family; having a new playmate; getting to watch cartoons; cuddling; genetic immortality". Sigrid, a veteran of 30 years' teaching, seems briefly nonplussed at this disparity. "Hmm, professional women in New York find the birth experience more difficult because they've been used to being in control for so long," she sighs, finally.

> Are you kidding — I want my epidural in the parking lot

Thirty years ago, when she arrived here armed with her master's degree in midwifery from Sweden, she was appalled to discover that most American women in labour had a general anaesthetic and woke up two days later to discover they had a baby. "As a result, we lost a generation of birthing stories. Now, what is the expectation of women giving birth in America today?"

"Pain?" winces the lawyer.

"Right," cries Sigrid. "You all think you are going to have such terrible pain that you are going to need a lot of drugs to get through it."

"Are you kidding? I want the epidural in the parking lot," says Anna-Marie.

"Well in Europe — in Britain, for example," Sigrid continues, nodding at Peter and me, "people don't tell each other such awful pain stories." Resisting the urge to contradict her, I turn to Bill, who is fiddling with his Walkman. "Have you got your nursery sorted out yet?" I ask, aware that his baby is due in three weeks. "Well, we have moved some books," he says, bleakly.

Sunday: The second morning of our course takes on the character of a drama workshop as Sigrid assures us that the fastest way to learn is through role play. This morning's action is a Caesarean section. I am appointed senior anaesthetist and spend the next ten minutes pretending to administer an epidural while Peter, playing the surgeon, pretends to slice into the abdomen of Anna-Marie, the patient. Sigrid assures us that the easiest way to avoid being overwhelmed by a C-section is to learn all about it.

"Hey, it's just like *ER*," says Bill, referring to last week's episode in which a man drove his wife, who was in labour, to the hospital but managed to cause a fatal car accident on the way and ended up being dragged away by police just before his wife gave birth.

"Oh God," cries Sigrid crossly. "I've been a consultant to all those damn shows and they drive me nuts, I tell you. You always see the birthing mother screaming and groaning and carrying on like bloody murder. They have to do that to make it exciting, for the drama, right? But that's not the true experience," she assures us. "Remember, birth is normal. Write it down. Birth is normal."

Just another upper class junkie...

The Marquess of Bristol, Britain's most notorious drug user, was not unique. Heroin is a powerful lure to those who seem to have everything, says former addict **Sean Thomas**

For most people, this week's obituaries of Frederick John Hervey, the 7th Marquess of Bristol and Britain's most notorious heroin addict, who was found dead in his home at the weekend, must have seemed full of almost uniquely sad phrases. Here was the "charismatic" heir to a "beautiful Suffolk estate", a "highly generous" aristocrat possessed of an "arrogant and dashing charm" who nonetheless squandered his "immense fortune" on "drugs, lavish parties, cars, helicopters and yachts" before dying a "pathetic" semi-cripple at 44.

To anyone who has been a heroin addict, these facts and phrases are not uniquely sad. They are, on the contrary, predictable and familiar. The more bohemian purlieus of Notting Hill, Mayfair, Chelsea and beyond are full of tragic cases like Johnny Hervey. Walk down the King's Road or Ladbroke Grove and you will see them: moneyed junkies wasting trust funds and legacies, estates and inheritances, on class A drugs.

Some are genuinely aristocratic (like the Marquess of Blandford), some merely rich; some of them have famous parents (like the late Olivia Channon), some are infamous themselves. Many have Johnny Hervey's "arrogant and dashing charm", all lead desperately limited, desperately repetitive lives — mostly spent sitting by the phone in squalid flats waiting for their dealers to return their calls, or trying to locate Daddy to arrange another loan so as to afford the next quarter of an ounce.

I well know this type, the upper-class junkie, because for several years I was also a heroin addict in London and I ran into more than a few of them. It is impossible not to. Central London's hard drug scene (and by hard drugs I mean, primarily, cocaine and heroin) is like a small town within a town, a hidden and incestuous village, a tightly knit network of dealers, contacts, clinics and "well-known addresses".

The drugs underworld is also surprisingly egalitarian: the need for drugs is a great equaliser. Thus it is possible for the crackhead from Hoxton to use the same dealer as the junked-up ambassador's daughter from Kensington, or the poor little rich coke-snorter from Belgravia to end up sharing a needle with the homeless Glaswegian car thief.

I might have been a fairly ordinary, middle-class addict but I think I once saw Johnny Hervey doing coke in a smoky basement flat in Fulham; I can't be sure because I was too stoned. I do know that I have bumped into the Blandfords and Channons of this underworld. I have stared blankly across the same glass-topped tables. I have used the same rolled-up £20 notes to sniff the same "China white". I have sat waiting for the same courier to deliver the same cocaine in the same Hampstead penthouses.

Usually the glass-topped tables and Hampstead penthouses were theirs. Upper-class junkies are nothing if not "highly generous" and hospitable. They hate to feel alone in their vice, and doing heroin can be the most desperately bleak, sad, godless, solitary existence imaginable.

Why, then, with all their chances and opportunities, with the best educations and circumstances that money can buy, do so many rich and well-born people fall prey to hard drug addiction? It is easy to understand the appeal of a powerful analgesic such as heroin to someone stuck on the seventh floor of an inner city tower block. It is easy to appreciate how you might want to numb your mind and senses if all you could see ahead of you was another week on the dole. But why would an Eton-educated millionaire, heir to a Caribbean villa and a castle in Scotland, want to do the same?

The answer is that the two ends of the social spectrum share one curse: unemployment. People who are rich already have little to do except to make more money. Second (and third, and fourth, and fifth) generation rich people have even less to do: their money and status are taken for granted. *Ennui* and boredom are therefore the most feared enemies of the poor little rich girl or boy. And you can only have so many "cars, helicopters and yachts" before even cars and helicopters and yachts start to pall.

Which is where heroin comes in. As anyone who has tried the drug will know, heroin is a sovereign remedy for *taedium vitae*. On heroin, time ceases to exercise its grip. Hours, days, lives can fly by and all you have done is to sit in your flat and dribble. Weeks can pass and all you have done is to repeat the endless but somehow comforting cycle of the drug addict's life: score, consume, get stoned, score, consume, get stoned. For people with no job, who do not need a job, who would never conceive of demeaning themselves with something as common as a job, heroin addiction *is* a job. It gives shape and purpose to otherwise shapeless, purposeless lives.

The second reason that I believe heroin appeals to the rich, noble and leisured is its dangerous "glamour", its subversive image. For those stupid enough, like me, to try heroin in the first place, it exercises an allure because it is seen as somehow chic, as intriguingly nihilistic, as amusingly antisocial and transgressive. And it's so easy. If you want people to see you as cool and cynical, as sophisticated and daring, but you are too lazy or dim to do anything serious about it — like become a soldier, or train to be an artist — how much easier simply to take heroin.

This spurious attraction of heroin as a short cut to "coolness" is assisted by the fact that the drug reinforces the addict's self-esteem, by paralysing any self-critical faculties that might lurk in the psyche. Thus the painfully anorexic junkie sees herself as fashionably thin; the desperately boring addict sees himself as suavely aloof.

The upper-class junkie might seem a modern phenomenon, but there are historical parallels. Consider the obsession with duelling in the 18th and 19th centuries. Here was another dangerous, possibly fatal, certainly pointless activity. Here was another ludicrously nihilistic pursuit condemned by polite society but indulged in certain upper-class circles. Like heroin, duelling had glamour; like heroin, it relieved the awful boredom of the leisured life. The French toffs of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* would, these days, be smoking freebase in Cadogan Square instead of slaughtering each other with sabres.

Lest I seem to be glamorising heroin myself, however, I should add that there is one big difference between the two upper-class vices. When 18th-century aristos were not murdering each other at dawn, they were running the world and discovering vaccines and writing *Don Juan*. When modern upper-crust junkies are not doing junk, all they are doing is trying to find more junk so they can do more junk so they don't have to go out and find any more junk for a while. As the wretched Marquess of Bristol would no doubt attest if only he had the chance, cocaine and heroin are, in truth, about as glamorous as meths. Only more expensive. And more moronic. And more pitiful.

C. RYAN



Shooting up: "Weeks pass and all you have done is to repeat the cycle of the addict's life — score, consume, get stoned"

BRYN COULTON

The Marquess of Bristol, heroin addict, pictured in 1996

HEROIN: THE FACTS

■ USERS agree that heroin is seductive, pernicious and now the most fashionable of all the so-called recreational drugs with the young. Diamorphine, to give the killer its clinical name, gives a sense of extraordinary wellbeing and security before relentlessly destroying every victim too weak to quit.

■ TODAY the drug is easily available in every city and town in the country. And "smack" is cheap too: at £20 a gram it is a third cheaper than its class A rival, cocaine.

■ THE drug can be snorted, injected into veins or smoked — "chasing the dragon". Addiction is as inevitable as death and taxes.

■ MAIN producers of the opium poppy, from which heroin is produced, include Turkey, Mexico, Iran and Lebanon. But the big fields are in the so-called Golden Triangle running from Laos through Cambodia and Burma.

■ THE hazards of heroin use are appalling: appetite loss, convulsions, vomiting, loss of bowel control, sleeplessness, rotting teeth, impotence in men, infertility in women, and death.

Extant former users include Rolling Stones Keith Richards and Charlie Watts, Eric Clapton, Jamie Blandford, Lou Reed and several supermodels who cannot be named for legal reasons.

Among those who paid the ultimate price: jazzmen Charlie Parker and Miles Davis; Jim Morrison of The Doors; Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols.

Olé for the tangoing President

Like him or not, you have to admit that President Clinton is amazing. Judged on resilience, he beats all other politicians in the United States hands down.

On Monday night, he led a tango around the White House floor after the state banquet for President Menem of Argentina, wriggling and swooping with a huge grin on his face. Earlier, he had bounced round the Detroit Motor Show, telling company reps — to nervous laughs — that his beloved first car, a Mustang, did not have very good brakes.

On more serious ground, he is firmly set on delivering his State of the Union speech on Tuesday, a chance to remind the American people that the state of the union is indeed great. The economy is barely slowing, the Dow Jones is back to its high points, the dollar is rising against the new euro.

Behind the scenes, his 11-strong legal team has launched a ferocious defence to the charges against him, denying that he committed perjury or obstruction of justice, or that he has done anything to deserve being thrown out of office.

It is a genuinely impressive display. Mr Clinton may have no self-restraint, but he is undeniably tough. His response, when attacked, is to keep going. It is at least one of the qualities you might want in a leader. It is not surprising that the many Americans who still like, or tolerate, Mr Clinton are so reluctant to see him thrown out.

Contrast that with the Senate's stuffy hamfistedness this week, as it found itself finally in the spotlight. Of the many admirable features of the US Constitution, one of the greatest is the inclusion of a formal procedure for deciding whether the President should be sacked. But as the process is playing out now in Washington, it risks becoming a farce. The Capitol, rising from its snow-covered hill against a dark blue sky, is a backdrop against which any politician looks like a Founding Father. And don't they know it? Senators — who now refer to themselves as the President's jurors — have stood in front of the nation's television cameras in below-freezing temperatures for 20 minutes on end. They have perfected the look: a herringbone overcoat, perhaps with velvet collar, a woollen scarf, under a cap of pure white hair of the kind Washington does so well. The faces are timeless and could grace a banknote or coin from any century.

The words, though, are instantly perishable in their ponderous search for importance. In a town where politicians speak as if testing each phrase for inscription on their own memorial, scores have declaimed: "We are on trial, in how we conduct ourselves, not just the President." Again and again, we have heard them recite George Washington's notion that the Senate is the saucer in which legislation is poured to be cooled, after being heated in the boiling passions of the House. For extra historical weight, dozens have invoked the Senate's Roman predecessor. The taste for classical references provoked gentle satire even from the sober *Washington Post*, which teased Democrat Robert Byrd for mentioning Plutarch, Aeschylus, Solon, Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius and Xenophon within the space of 80 minutes, but apparently being unsure of Monica Lewinsky's name.

The best antidote to the Senate this week was to walk the frozen mile down the Mall to the new monument to FDR. Spread over a couple of acres, the craggy building blocks are inscribed with dozens of his genuinely memorable speeches, from "I hate war" to "Demoralisation caused by vast unemployment is our greatest extravagance".

But the memorial is also a reminder that the crises he faced deserved that language. The Senate's problem is that its subject does not warrant grandeur. The trial comes down to a debate about whether the President lied when he said he did not touch Ms Lewinsky's genitals, and whether it matters if he did.

Part of this week's pomposity stems from senators' frustration. You can have a sliver of sympathy. They have been elected after campaigns of numbing expense to what they have been told are among the most prestigious positions in national life. Chosen for six years, they pride themselves on being more "statesmanlike" than House representatives, elected for two-year terms. But for the past four years, since Newt Gingrich's 1994 Republican Revolution, the television screens have been filled with House members, unruly younger siblings noisily seizing hold of the legislative agenda. The Senate's main distinction has been to cool any reforms to the point of freezing. It has initiated some minor legislation, but has blocked scores of *judicial, administrative* and ambassadorial nominations from the White House, grotesquely undermining the Administration. It also helped to squash attempts at campaign finance reform.

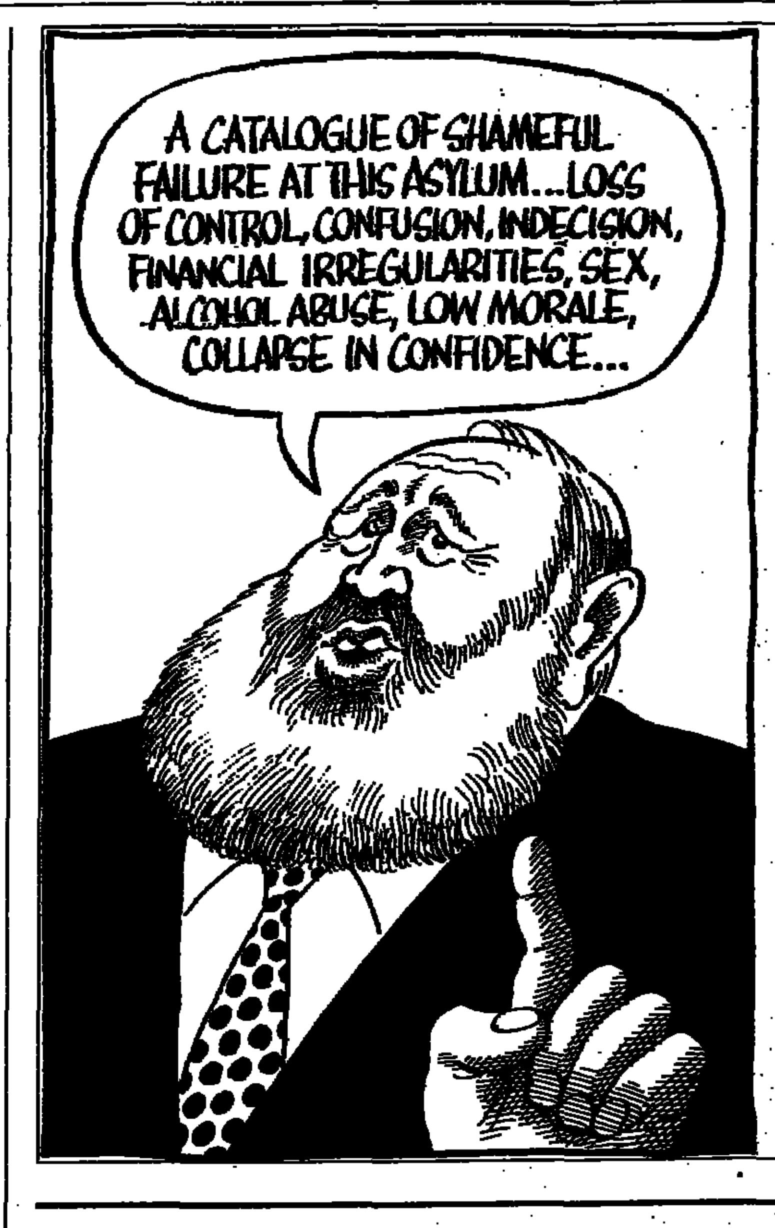
Bronwen Maddox

Against that record, we can see what is going to happen. The Senate will have the chance after the opening statements to throw out the whole matter. It is unlikely to take it, given how fond its members seem of the attention. So it will have a trial of sorts — longer by months if it calls witnesses.

While that process continues, there remains a tiny chance that public opinion will finally swing against Mr Clinton, and that two thirds of senators will find in themselves a need to expel him from office. But it is much more likely that public opinion will stay where it has throughout the saga: firmly against Mr Clinton's early exit. It is then hard to imagine the Senate throwing him out. More likely, it will arrive many weeks from now at a formal expression of censure, the position that many senators already hold.

Many people are understandably uneasy at the image of the happily tangoing President, shrugging off all the charges against him. But the public is still right in its unchanging view that his behaviour does not warrant his removal from office. Much of the Senate appears to agree. If it wants to earn the historical compliments it has showered on itself, it should throw out the trial next week.

comment@the-times.co.uk





Thatcher's fifth term

The world according to Blair is an eerily familiar place, far from Liberty Hall

After the Project and the Launch comes the Relaunch. You move forward or you die. This week the Blair Government staged a bizarre ministerial floorshow, ostensibly to divert attention from the pre-Christmas resignations. The relaunch was long planned as a mid-term boost to the Cabinet's image, but the seasonal bloodletting gave it a sensational overture.

Relaunches are for connoisseurs. The shrewd general always awaits the second offensive. The wise executive delays his move to head the rescue team. Never buy the prototype, always the redesign. Now that the Government is entering its stride, we have seen the back of those who stood forward in 1997, of the Mandelsons, Robinsons, Whelans and Drapers. They passed muster in the trenches, but not at the château HQ. It took Harold Wilson two years to be rid of the human impedimenta of Opposition, and Margaret Thatcher three years. Tony Blair is putting his past behind him with impressive speed.

Out too has gone the old spin, of community, fairness and decentralism. In their place appears the phraseology of power. The relaunch is said to be about modernisation, discipline and leadership, especially leadership. In a speech this week, Gordon Brown eulogised Mr Blair in terms reminiscent of a Maoist acolyte. A stream of other speeches gushes from Downing Street's devil's kitchen, vetted for political correctness. I have read them. They claim that the new, non-squabble Cabinet has set itself to "deliver on its election promises ... push foward with modernising Britain ... and deliver clear leadership at home and abroad". These speeches are awful. Mr Blair makes John Major seem a Cicero and Mrs Thatcher a veritable Demosthenes. I defy anyone to distil novelty from such waffle.

But nothing in politics should be taken at face value. The key to this week's Blair relaunch is the lack of anything new to say. And that lack is due to nothing of substance having been launched in the first place. This week's vacuity is embarrassing only to those who misunderstood the original project. It was, as the trickle of Blairite memoirs attest, simply to win power. Now that power is won, the project is to keep it. The essence of Blairism, as the bard said, "gives to airy nothing but a local habitation and a name".

One of the abiding jokes of British politics is that defeating Mr Major in 1997 required of Mr Blair and his team superhuman skills of political genius. Another is that this victory instigated a revolution to rank with the fall of the Bastille and the St Petersburg uprising. The true achievement of the Blair team — more properly the Kinnock-Smith-Blair continuum — was more modest. It was to crush the Labour Left. After that, an ape could have beaten the Tories in 1997. No less hilarious is the concept of revolution. There is hardly an action taken by the Government over the past 18 months that would not have emerged from Whitehall had the moon changed and Mr Major scrambled back to Downing Street.

This week has seen neo-Thatcherism rampant. The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, continued to make his predecessor, Michael Howard, seem a wet liberal. Yesterday he ended Labour's opposition to "three-strikes" mandatory sentencing, and extended the invasion of judicial discretion to property crime. He expects to add a further 4,000 young people to Britain's overloaded prisons. Liberalism on crime is now a defunct ideology. The same is true of education. David Blunkett is reimposing Victorian payment by examination results on teachers. At the weekend he proposed privatising local authorities, an innovation at which even the Tories had balked. His edicts on homework, family reading, truancy and league tables would come well from a Wackford Squeers.

Simon Jenkins

At Health, Frank Dobson is hoist on his party's own petard. In Opposition Labour treated health politics as an exercise in statistical terrorism. Mr Dobson is now condemned to death by a thousand waiting lists. When he demands a cut in lists, people die for emergency beds. When he offers more money to nurses, he loses money for drugs. He is another Virginia Bottomley: those who seek credit for everything are blamed for everything. Over at Social Security, the new regime may or may not clean the Augean stables left by the Tories. One thing is certain, life is going to get tougher for claimants, not easier. Workfare, like pensions reform, are mainstream Thatcherite policies that the Tories never had the guts to implement. The same is true of legal aid, Tube privatisation and the sale of air traffic control. There is not a drop of "social-ism" to any of this.

Defence and overseas are no different. The Government has kept the Tory nuclear submarines, the Eurofighter project and proposed a new generation of aircraft carriers. In foreign affairs Labour is as tied to the coat-tails of America after the Cold War as was Mrs Thatcher (more excusably) during it. In Iraq and Kosovo, Mr Blair loves his role as bombardier-in-chief to the White House. In Europe he began, like Mr Major, to walk tall at its heart and then found events moving him briskly to the periphery. Not a summit passes without an attack of malaise Anglaise. Nothing has changed.

Put this to the more thoughtful denizens of Downing Street and they fall back mournfully on constitutional reform. They are right. Scottish devolution would not have been a Tory measure in its present, radical form, though I am convinced some assembly would by now have been conceded. But then I am not sure Labour today would have conceded what was granted so promptly after the last general election. The evidence of the London mayoralty and John Prescott's White Papers on transport and local democracy is that the decentralist enthusiasm of 1997 has all but vanished from "the relaunch". The London Bill now before Parliament depicts the new mayor as a sub-agent of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

To most of this Britain cries Hurrah. In a perverse way, this is what the 1997 electors appear to have wanted. That was why only 43 per cent of them voted Labour. They booed Mr Major off stage, but not his policies. Whatever the Blairites may like to claim, the 1997 election was precisely to change personalities not policies. Mr Blair has recognised this. He has kept taxes down and pandered to Middle England in everything from education, transport and law and order, to hunting and duty-free shopping.

Old Labour is not the only casualty of this phenomenon. So too is old Liberal and old Tory. The Third Way was supposedly between Left and Right, but has swerved out and is overtaking the Tories to the Right. Small wonder William Hague can make so little impression. But Mr Blair's neo-Thatcherism is of a peculiar sort. On the libertarian-authoritarian spectrum, he leans heavily to the latter. His is the Thatcherism of wider regulation and a highly centralised government sector. Ask any doctor, farmer, teacher or small businessman whether he feels more or less "free" under Labour and you will get a raspberry for a reply.

Under Mr Blair as under Mrs Thatcher, intermediate institutions are distrusted. He believes in Downing Street as the fountainhead of all patronage (even who should be Poet Laureate), but also as sole conduit of political accountability. He is not the man to accord constitutional subsidiarity to Parliament, the judiciary, the professions, the unions or local government. Blairite democracy is what de Tocqueville classified as direct democracy. It uses the media to address the nation over the head of party and Parliament, and uses pollsters to hear the nation's response.

The political content of such government is impossible to define since it is a residual of market research. It is free-market and Thatcherite, fiscally conservative, authoritarian and centrally ordered. Its watchwords are not social justice but efficiency and value for money. It is essentially illiberal since its middle-income constituency is essentially insecure. Yet the public supporting this programme clearly outnumbers those whom it neglects. This world according to Blair is an eerie place. How long it can last remains a mystery.

comment@the-times.co.uk

'Don't worry about the dreaded millennium bug. With a bit of luck, we may never even get there'

I know, even as I strum these opening bars, that I shall hate myself in the morning: because that is when I shall see this stuff in print, and know that you are hating me, too. Yet, much as I hate your hating me even more than I hate hating myself, I have no professional option: it is the traditional lot of the soothsayer to get the sooth said and then wait to be not merely hated but stoned, blinded, incinerated, chucked over cliffs, and generally given the bum's rush for doing no more than his duty to say it, if the said sooth is not what his listeners want to hear.

And you will not want to hear mine. For despite the fact that I am giving you 210 days' warning of the sooth, there is nothing you can do about it, except spend those days growing ever more anxious as each one passes. And God knows you are anxious enough already: indeed, there may well be far fewer of you around than usual to read and hate me tomorrow as the result of your having once again sprung up early to hurtle from shop to shop, filling your car-boots with soap, pilchards, fags, whiskey, candles, aspirins, razor blades, mint cake, long-life milk and big fat books, thanks to the scant 352 days you thought you had until the arrival of the only thing you thought you had to be anxious over because you couldn't do anything about it.

Well, the good news is that you may have 142 fewer days to drive yourself nuts at the prospect of January 1, 2000, and the bite of the bug that will fill the welkin with Ukrainian missiles, change all the traffic lights to blue, cut off your utilities, blow your pension fund on loose women, and force you into the cellar to survive as best you can on your Tesco hoardings. The bad news is that you may not have to endure those 142 days of anxiety because you may not get past August 11, 1999.

Alan Coren

I know this because I have spent the weekend reading about total eclipses. With one single exception these are a bad thing, and since that single exception exists only in fiction, you can see how truly bad a thing they are. The exception is Victorian stories involving English schoolboys in Polynesian cooking-pots, where, just before the chums come to the boil, a total eclipse causes the Fuzzy-Wuzzies to flee in terror, so that their lunches have only to wait until the Sun reappears to burn their bonds with a magnifying glass and paddle home to Eton.

In real life eclipses are not as benevolent: the history of the blotted Sun is an unremitting record of death, destruction and mayhem, a tale of plague and shipwreck, fire and flood, rapine and mania. To pluck just one from my many sources, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* cannot record an eclipse without observing that cows dropped dead, dogs grew feral, crops withered, and bishops went mad.

And those were simple days; simpler by far than next August 11, when stiff cattle and barking clerics will be the least of our concerns. I note, for example, that five million visitors will be heading for Cornwall's unparalleled ecliptic view. How will they get there when, with barely a century to anticipate the demand, the Department of Transport has had neither the time to lift the Honiton contraflow nor the clout to persuade the rail companies to lay on the extra carriage they have been building since 1991? Will the emergency services be able to cope with the ensuing chaos, the rages which follow it, the casualties which follow that? How can they, they cannot cope with anything now, how will it be with half of them off work and trying to get to Cornwall? And never mind Cornwall, can the NHS handle the vast numbers of nationwide injuries occasioned by people walking into things in the blackness, getting crushed by falling cows, and bitten by crazed pets or bishops?

I snatch these horrors at random, for who can guess what terrors await us when the Sun goes out, leaving villains to plunder unchecked, Cabinet ministers to be distracted by all sorts of unfit mischief, or even (he's a strange cove, your Johnny Sun) computers to blow a gasket? Then again, might I be fretting for nothing? Might, right this minute, the Prime Minister be working on an Eclipse Initiative?

THE TIMES DIARY

Cook's round

AS ROBIN COOK braced himself for his former wife's allegations that he was a drunk, he was buying refreshments at an off-licence. Saturday afternoon saw him pop into Victoria Wine in Westerham, three miles from his weekend pad, Chevening in Kent, and bag two boxes of booze. In his thirst, he left a portfolio in the shop. The manager chased after Cook to return it. "He was obviously going to have a drink," ventures a punter.

Next day, Margaret Cook said she had once found the Foreign Secretary reclining on a dining room floor, thirst sated. His friends denied the slurs: Harriet Harman was "astonished". Confused, I rang the FO. It refused to comment, then rang back: "He was buying wine for two dinner parties." How jolly.

● *INSPECTING the posterior of that magnificent creature, Peter Mandelson, has been Sir David Attenborough. Alarmed by extreme tales about the former minister, he examined Peter's behind in a box at the Albert Hall. No, he couldn't find a demonic pointed tail, he told Mandelson — who was unamused.*

Not versed

THE widow of T.S. Eliot (both pictured) has said no contemporary poet is talented enough to become Poet Laureate. She has urged me to



tell No 10 to veto the shortlist: "I don't see what the rush is. Look at what has gone before — the talent of Hughes and Betjeman which is not matched now. They should wait until there is someone outstanding. Paul Muldoon could be perfect in a few years." Perfectly dull, perhaps.

● *PRIM matrons in Hampshire are wilting because of plans for an annual Benny Hill festival. The comedian immortalised Eastleigh in his song Ernie the Milkman (he worked on the town's floats, giving him inspiration for life) and local historians want to mark his birthday. "We will have floats, with locals dressed as Benny, and a milk horse," says Gordon Cox, of a local history club. Says a local pillar: "Bikini bimbos are just not us."*

Off spinner

THE son of Glenda Jackson, the former Oscar-wining actress, is a candidate to take Charlie Whelan's job as Gordon Brown's spinner. Dan Hodges has managed to sell Steve Norris, the energetic head of the Road Haulage Association, to a surprised public. But he might blanche at plotting a "Norris for mayor" campaign, especially if his Mum runs for Labour. Like Whelan, he is a regular at the Red Lion pub, and is popular with ministers,



many of whom he has known as friends of Glenda since childhood.

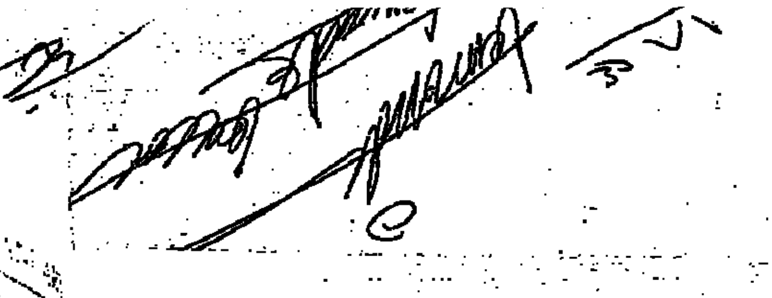
"It's time to hang up my CB radio. I will be leaving the RHA soon. I am interested in working for the Chancellor." Good luck, matey.

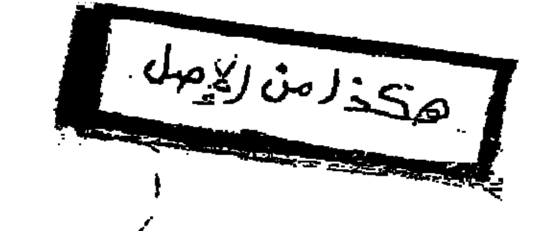
● *A RAG invites readers to bid for lunches with celebs, to chew over the careers of Rory Bremner, Darcey Bussell, or Alastair Campbell. Hmm, muck-raking for lunch.*

Low spirits

SINEAD O'CONNOR, the rebellious Irish rock chick who ripped up a picture of the Pope, has been told she can become a *priest*. The offer of ordination is from dissident Bishop Pat Buckley, excommunicated after marrying divorcees. Buckley says O'Connor has a "deep spiritual element". So deep, that she describes her devotion to God as "something for myself".

JASPER GERARD





IN EUROPE'S NAME

The European Parliament should vote out the Commissioners

Jacques Santer is right about one thing, and wrong in every other aspect of his handling, both arrogant and self-exculpatory, of the European Parliament's challenge to the European Commission. The President is right that only "zero tolerance" will put the Commission's management of public money "above reproach". Yet the only zero tolerance that he himself has shown is of the whistle-blowing by honest officials from within his own walls. His barefaced assertion this week that "we are a victim of our own transparency" would alone justify an ample majority in the European Parliament tomorrow for the vote of censure that would force all 20 Commissioners to stand down.

Mr Santer, who took office in 1995 promising that his Commission "will do less, but do it better", has had four years in which to clean the stables of nepotism, cronyism and corruption. How little has changed since the Delors heyday is best illustrated by last November's annual report of the Court of Auditors, which for the fourth year running qualified the Commission accounts because £3 billion, 5 per cent of the total budget, was fraudulently spent or could not be accounted for. Citing "systematic failures to apply requisite checks", it concluded: "The incidence of errors affecting ... transactions ... is so high that the Court has had to give an adverse opinion on legality and regularity."

If the EU were a business, in other words, its directors would be facing the courts. The report found a £2.8 billion understatement of the Commission's "off balance sheet commitments". The gaps hide a tale of faked contracts and building projects, of officials trading bribes for jobs, of ghost workers and of sinecures for friends, such as the contract Edith Cresson, the Commissioner for youth training, gave her dentist for advice on Aids. The latest audit discovered that £600 million allocated to repairing 65 unsafe nuclear power plants in Eastern Europe had been lost, wasted, embezzled or left unspent.

The Commission's response shows the culture at work. It admits that there were no records for the £600 million but insists that it was not wasted and that "only" £2 million was being investigated for fraud. Without accounts, how could it know? To the ostrich reflex, add obstruction. The Court's President, Bernhard Friedmann, complains that the Santer Commission blocked with "untruths" his auditors' efforts to investigate £420 million of what the Commission calls "book-keeping errors" — money that vanished from the EU's 1993-95 humanitarian aid budget — and fraudulent aid contracts worth a further £1.7 million. Police investigating corruption in security and tourism budgets have had to battle against non-disclosure of documents and the Commission's reluctance to lift officials' immunity. It was the Court, not the Commission, that forced the closure of the Mediterranean programme because of serious abuses, cited by Mr Santer as proof of his zeal. Mr Santer says that Uclaf, his internal anti-fraud unit, tackled 5,000 fraud cases last year. Even if that were credible — it has only 30 staff — barely 50 officials have been disciplined and only eight dismissed.

"If fraud in the European Community goes on as it has," Herr Friedmann believes, "it could bring down the whole of the EU." Mr Santer has this week had the gall to berate Göran Persson, the Swedish Prime Minister, for saying much the same. But in the looking-glass world of EU politics, the likelihood is that it will not even bring down this Commission.

Last November Mr Santer dared the European Parliament to back him or sack him, knowing that its only power is the blunderbuss of a censure vote against all 20 commissioners, just and unjust alike. The dominant Socialist group has abetted his gamble; it has been exhorted behind the scenes by Germany and Britain to avoid an hiatus until a new Commission was appointed. This argument is spurious; the best Commissioners could be part of a new team determined to sweep Brussels clean. It is better that there should be a short crisis than a Commission shorn of credibility hanging on for a final year.

To lure MEPs into making fools of themselves by backing down, Mr Santer has thrown them a few German-made bones of accountability. But he has stood by Mme Cresson, whose Leonardo programme is riddled, internal auditors report, with "the misappropriation of funds", and by Manuel Marin, head of humanitarian aid when vast sums went missing and, now, of the disgraced Med programme. Even if a strong majority passes resolutions denouncing them tomorrow, neither is expected to go gracefully.

That leaves the blunderbuss. The EU Parliament is a glass house from which to throw stones. But, while the expenses MEPs claim are scandalous, the censure vote is their chance to show that they are not craven as well as venal. With an eye on this year's EU elections, MEPs should block their ears and vote for censure in Europe's name.

YEMEN AND FINSBURY PARK

Unanswered questions from killings and kidnap

The arrest of five British Muslims in Yemen is embarrassing because it suggests that the kidnappers who seized their Western hostages were inspired by Islamic radicals in this country. It is disturbing because the Yemeni authorities have neither charged nor freed the men, amid evidence of mistreatment in prison. What is also plain is that Britain is still seen abroad as a haven for Islamic extremists.

The link between the kidnappings and the arrests centres on the Finsbury Park mosque in North London, where the imam, who makes no secret of his wish to overthrow the Sanaa Government, was in contact with the kidnappers after the Birmingham Muslims, including his own stepson, set out for Yemen. Under Sheikh Abu Hamza, the mosque has become a notorious centre of extremism. Pamphlets circulated here a few years ago calling for the killing of foreigners in Algeria. Omar Bakri Mohammed, who tried to organise a rally of Muslim anti-Western activists in 1996, is associated with the mosque. Many local Muslims are so incensed by the extremism preached there that they have publicly dissociated themselves from it.

Whether or not the mosque has been running training camps, it is disturbing that London should have become so significant a centre for those calling for Islamic revolution. Britain has come under attack from its friends in the Middle East and Europe for its long tolerance of activities that would be clearly criminal if directed against this country: these include the plotting, material support and advocacy of terrorism. Under legislation tacked on to the emergency anti-terrorism Bill after Omagh, the first two are indeed now illegal. The Government has meanwhile tried to reassure France, Germany and others that it will not allow London to become the centre of global Islamist plots.

Yet if the Yemeni charges are upheld, Middle Eastern regimes locked in struggle with Islamist groups will use London as a scapegoat, insisting that all local terrorism is masterminded from abroad. Some, like the radicals in Britain, have an interest in exaggerating the influence of splinter groups. This is unjust to the vast majority of British Muslims, who are appalled by the glorification of political violence that does such harm to the perception of Islam. As Britain's Muslims approach Eid al-Fitr, the joyful feast marking the end of Ramadan, they do not want to be associated with kidnappings and subversion preached by a few fanatics trying to build up a following. Islam is a noble religion; the law must be invoked against those whose violent creeds debase it.

BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

The DSS should look with sympathy at deaf ex-servicemen

All too often Conservative ministers in the last Parliament appeared to make decisions more on the literal application of rules than the spirit behind them. One example, shortly to be re-examined by this Government, concerned the conditions under which former servicemen may claim additional benefit payments for loss of hearing linked to their time in uniform.

Until 1996 this extra income could be awarded in one of two circumstances. A claimant would be immediately compensated if, at the moment of leaving military life, he or she had suffered at least a 20 per cent loss of hearing as a result of excessive noise encountered during service. Others who had suffered lesser but notable hearing loss would be entitled to a rising increment in benefit over time as they too approached this 20 per cent figure. The logic behind this second section was that either there would be an after-effect of hearing loss incurred through service or that the noise encountered during these years made premature deafness much more probable.

Two years ago, the last Government declared that new scientific evidence had undermined the basis for this latter category. There were no secondary effects of partial deafness after the initial noise-related incidents had occurred and virtually all subsequent additional loss of hearing was a result of ageing. This change saved the social security budget £35 million; and left veterans outraged. They were supported by David Clark, the Shadow Defence Secretary, who argued that the switch ran against "all conventional medical evidence and is a smokescreen to save money".

In 1998 Baroness Hollis of Heigham announced that the new Government now accepted the data on which its predecessor had altered past arrangements. The minister acknowledged that this was an area of controversy and offered a further review by independent experts that will be completed next month. The Royal British Legion has sought, without success, to persuade the Government to spend £20,000 on fresh research on the cumulative loss of hearing. Ministers will not find it easy to persuade the public that those who suffered during Service life are not more likely to endure deafness later. Their case will be stronger if they have ensured that every avenue of proper inquiry has been fully exhausted.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

High standards demanded of those in public life

From the Vicar of Jesmond

Sir, In supporting Robin Cook (report, January 11), Tony Blair seemed to dismiss the issues relating to the private life of his Foreign Secretary as "scandal, gossip and trivia". The Prime Minister wanted to get back to "the things that really matter".

But the break-up of marriage and the marriage-based family does "really matter". Even if you ignore the private human damage, there are public exchequer costs. According to government estimates the annual "costs to the public purse of marital breakdown" are a staggering £5 billion (*Research Paper 96/42* p74), and that excludes all hidden costs. Surely it does "really matter" that £5 billion is not potentially available for the current NHS crisis, or for education.

The sexual immoralities and marriage failures of public figures who should set public standards are a proper public concern. They cannot be dismissed as "trivia". They call for repentance. Lord Nolan, the chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, when interviewed soon after Tony Blair took office, said:

> Of all the behaviour which in my personal experience has caused the greatest misery to other human beings, I would put adultery pretty high on the list. I don't actually think you can expect a man with the strains of public life to perform adequately unless he has got a good home life to go back to.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID HOLLOWAY,
7 Otterburn Terrace, Jesmond,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 3AP.
January 11.

From Mr Alan Challoner

Sir, In her comment on the Margaret Cook book extracts ("A divorce of convenience", January 12), Libby Purves writes: "The only test of any action is whether it does good, and who can possibly benefit from this post-marital character assassination?"

Well, I believe we all can; if only because it serves as a reminder that, ostensibly, politicians are representatives of our society, having all the values and faults that are contained within it.

The shell of superiority with which many of them clothe themselves is a part of the act that is meant to protect them from being seen as ordinary mortals and to delude themselves into believing that any special gifts that they might have outweigh other considerations.

In the end, all politicians' beliefs are self-serving. The accoutrements of their position offer them some respite from what the rest of us must suffer as a result of their indulgences.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN CHALLONER,
Bodelwyddan,
Denbighshire LL18 5UR.
January 12.

From Mr Michael Stewardson

Sir, So Labour and the Prime Minister want an end to "gossip column" politics (don't we all). Funny: seemed to suit them well enough in opposition.

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL STEWARDSON,
6 Old Main Road, Pawlett,
Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 4RY.
January 11.

From Mrs Susannah Chapman

Sir, How sad to have a Foreign Secretary who leaves his admirable wife for his secretary. I am amazed how much newsprint has been taken up by the examination of the issues surrounding what used to be known as his "private life", just at a time when he and the Prime Minister have dragged us all into some very serious moves in the Middle East. I am very much more concerned by the increasing lack of diplomatic judgment he has shown than any domestic failings.

Why should the UK abandon the UN and all its careful approach in this thoughtless way? The raids on Iraq have caused huge damage to the development of international diplomacy in the region.

Why should we take a solitary policeman's role in the Middle East? We are no longer an empire and need a united approach with the rest of Europe.

Why should we play lapdog to Clinton whose judgment and timing must have some relation to his own domestic interests?

When a Muslim radical declares on television that our Government is guilty of international terrorism, I find myself in the astonishing and very sad position of agreeing with him.

Yours sincerely,
S. CHAPMAN,
Dove House,
Sutton, Suffolk IP9 2SD.
January 12.

From Mrs Patricia Perry

Sir, It has never been enough to be clever: those who demonstrate a lack of balanced judgment in their private lives invariably run the risk of showing the same unfortunate quality in their business and public activities.

How does the reputation of Great Britain stand now throughout the world?

Yours truly,
PATRICIA PERRY,
Long Meadow, Church Street,
Charlbury, Oxfordshire OX7 3PP.
January 11.

From Mr Simon Levene

Sir, It would have been nice if the Foreign Secretary had had an ethical domestic policy as well.

Yours faithfully,
SIMON LEVENE,
20 Berwyn Road,
Richmond upon Thames TW10 5BS.
January 10.

Did Paris have Roman origins?

From Professor J. G. Evans

Sir, Parisians should not be cast down by the findings of an archaeologist at the Ancient Paris Commission which suggest a Roman, rather than Gallic origin for their city (report, January 8). The paucity of remains beneath the Roman city Lutetia and, in particular, the absence of streets, houses and the earthworks of an *oppidum* are no hindrance to the area having been an important focus of Celtic life.

Oppida often enclosed an area of several tens of hectares, but they are an enigmatic type of site and served a multiplicity of purposes, varying from cattle enclosures, sites of prestige or ritual, to meeting places.

Importantly, they were not always formal settlements or proto-towns: even Caesar saw some hillforts with no urban characters as *oppida*. Indeed, there may have been *oppida* without earthworks at all, with just the place being important — a cleared area of woodland set aside for annual meetings and ceremonies and later put aside for grazing cattle. In Britain, York, Roman Eboracum, founded in an area of intensive Iron Age pastoralism, is on just such a site.

The methods of environmental archaeology like pollen analysis and soil science should be used to examine the surfaces beneath Roman Lutetia for traces of woodland clearance, pasturing, and other signs of intensive land use.

The natural features of the site, too, may be weighed in favour of a pre-Roman origin, with a major river, several side streams, hill pasture and lowland meadows, all typical of many *oppida*.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN EVANS,
Department of Archaeology,
University of Cardiff,
PO Box 909, Cardiff CF1 3XU.
January 9.

Blair and the Lib Dems

From Earl Russell

Sir, Peter Riddell ("Blairism at a turning point"; January 11) says that any movement of opinion "has been from Labour to the Liberal Democrats, rather than to the Tories. This suggests a mini-protest, rather than any fundamental shift in opinion". This prompts the reply: "Opinion on what question?"

Tony Blair's support has been so high because he has enjoyed the support both of those who voted for him because he was a change and those who voted for him because he was not. The fact that he has lost support to the Liberal Democrats suggests it was those who believed he was a change who are now disillusioned.

If Blair takes Peter Riddell's advice, the number of those disillusioned will grow, and so will the number of Liberal Democrat supporters.

Yours sincerely,
RUSSELL,
House of Lords.
January 11.

Nursing shortage

From Mrs Frances Stott, SRN

Sir, You are absolutely right to say that in order to tackle the current nursing crisis ministers need to take a fresh look at nurses' training (leading article, January 11; letters, January 12). While student nurses do spend time on the wards, much of their training now takes place in the classroom. No one would dispute the value of this, but for a practical job like nursing, classroom training should come second to practical experience.

By bringing student nurses back to the wards we would take pressure off trained staff; a competent student nurse is quite capable of taking a considerable amount of responsibility.

Students would get most of their training where they need it — doing the actual job. And the huge amount of money currently spent on classroom training (do student nurses really need to be taught such subjects as gender studies and sociology?) could be channelled towards a more realistic salary on completion of training.

Yours faithfully,
FRANCES STOTT,
Bleak House,
Coppenhall, Stafford ST18 9BW.
January 11.

Future for the flag

From Mr Stephen Flook

Sir, If at some time in the future Scotland were to gain its independence, what would become of the dear old Union Jack?

The thought of our flag being deprived of its Scottish element is depressing. However, could its retention in its present form be justified?

Yours faithfully,
S. A. FLOOK,
Court Lane Vineyard,
Ropley, Alresford,
Hampshire SO24 0DE.
January 12.

Business letters, page 27

Letters for publication may be faxed to 0171-782 5046.
e-mail to: *letters@the-times.co.uk*

Organ donors' 'presumed consent'

From Professor Roger Williams and Mr Robert A. Sells, FRCS

Sir, The agreement of the British Medical Association ethics committee that the profession should consider dropping their opposition to the removal of organs for transplantation without the express permission of the deceased (but in the absence of recorded objection — so called "presumed consent") represents a major shift in medical opinion (report, December 28). It has been supported by a major report in *The Lancet* (May 30, 1998).

Much of the resistance of doctors in the past to such a change in the law related to a worry that it might provoke an acrimonious debate, damaging public confidence in transplantation as a whole. We feel, like the BMA, that this is no longer likely to be the case, provided that the change is preceded by informed public debate.

Other measures for encouraging consent during life through the National Donor Register have had a limited impact. It would, in our view, be more informative and useful if the register was modified to include objections to donation as well as consent. In Belgium less than 2 per cent of the population have recorded an objection to the use of their organs since 1986, when "presumed consent" legislation was introduced into that country. Since then organ donation has substantially increased.

An additional statutory responsibility on hospitals — namely the early detection of suitable donors — would also increase the number of organs. This has been achieved in Spain by increasing the number of transplant co-ordinators and extending their role. The number of Spanish organs donated per million population is nearly double that in this country.

There is unequivocal, published evidence in the medical press that these two initiatives are effective in other European countries in closing the gap between transplant organ supply and demand. We therefore strongly back the BMA in its proposal.

Yours etc,
ROGER WILLIAMS
(Director, Institute of Hepatology,
University College London),
ROBERT A. SELLS
(Consultant transplant surgeon,
Royal Liverpool University Hospitals),
Institute of Hepatology,
University College London,
Harold Samuel House,
69-75 Chenies Mews, WC1E 6HX.
January 5.

From Mr T. T. King, FRCS

Sir, In wishing to shift opinion in favour of the recipient's rights to an organ and away from the donor's to agree, the BMA's ethics committee is proposing what I imagine is a new ethical principle: if one person has need of something belonging to another who apparently no longer needs it, it may be taken without consent.

It has always seemed to me that there have been two problems for transplant surgeons in their search for donors. One is that as suitable cases become available mostly by accident the supply is likely to be chronically inadequate. The second is that there is probably latent among those caring for suitable donors in their terminal state a distaste for the business.

The BMA proposal may do something to sidestep the second but is unlikely to solve the first.

Yours sincerely,
T. T. KING,
Ridgemount, Hutton Mount,
Brentwood, Essex CM13 2LX.
January 1.

Hendrix v Segovia

From Mr Martin Pearce

Sir, Mr Graham Wade's letter (January 7), extolling the claims of his hero, Segovia, over those of Jimi Hendrix to be included in your People of this Century, betrays reactionary hallmarks more characteristic of the last.

He says that Segovia "abominated everything represented by [Hendrix's] culture of cacophony, drugs and bizarre behaviour". Surely one man's "cacophony" is another man's sweet music. I personally am not keen on opera, dance, rap or jungle music but I would never write them off.

If drugs and bizarre behaviour disbarred anyone from claims to genius Coleridge, Byron, Mozart and Picasso amongst many others would have to be excluded.

Hendrix's brilliantly innovative use of amplifiers, feedback and white noise, as well as his incredible stage act, are still widely admired and emulated today. Just because he was prepared to experiment both with his music and ultimately his life doesn't make him any less a candidate than Segovia might have been.

Yours faithfully,
M. PEARCE,
The Chapel, Church Lane,
Islip, Oxfordshire OX5 2TA.
January 8.

From Mr P. Binley

Sir, Whilst Mr Wade put forward an otherwise convincing case for including Segovia over Jimi Hendrix, he did fail to indicate whether Segovia's abilities stretched to playing the guitar with his teeth.

Yours faithfully,
P. BINLEY,
4 Palairet Close,
Bradford on Avon BA15 1US.
January 7.

Beachy Head cliff fall

From the Chief Scientist at English Nature

Sir, I was puzzled by the comment in your interesting report on the cliff fall at Beachy Head (January 12) that this was proof that coastal landmarks are under threat.

Erosion created landmarks such as Beachy Head, and the cliffs are kept fresh and white by cliff falls. Without erosion the vertical white cliffs would stabilise and become covered by vegetation, turning green and losing much of their special landscape value. This has happened where chalk cliffs have been protected from the sea.

There is no doubt that our coastline is changing and, as the Environment Agency says, this process is probably speeding up. This presents us all with a real challenge, but in seeking to meet it we should not forget that the coastline we love has been shaped by natural forces, including erosion.

The lesson I take from Beachy Head is that if we want a living coast rather than a sterile, ugly, expensive and ultimately unsustainable concrete mess we will have to learn to live with change rather than always seeking to prevent it.

Yours faithfully,
KEITH DUFF,
Chief Scientist, English Nature,
Northminster House,
Peterborough PE1 1UA.
January 12.

Time warp?

From Mr David T. Staples

Sir, Mr Edward Russell (letter, December 30) queries the correct naming of years in the next century. Two thousand and odd or twenty and odd.

In 1968 Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrick made the definitive science fiction film *2001* (pronounced two thousand and one). They seem to have set a precedent.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID T. STAPLES,
11 St Luke's Church,
42 Mayfield Road, N8 9LP.
dstaples@tpc-lon.com
January 2.

Light on the subject

From Mr Jim Pearman

Sir, Philip Howard (January 8) asks how people did their intricate work with so little light in days gone by.

I had an elderly relative who made lace using a small oil lamp with the light focused through a spherical bottle. This produced a spot of light about one inch in diameter; just enough to enable her to work.

Yours faithfully,
JIM PEARMAN,
Brouwerijstraat 29,
1840 Steenhuffel, Belgium.
jim.pearman@compaq.com
January 8.

True lies?

From Mr John Hicks

Sir, You report today that, in a test devised by a management expert, anyone who answers "true" to the question "I have never unknowingly told a lie — true or false?" is placed under suspicion.

That is unfortunate, because to anyone who understands the ordinary use of the English language there can be no other answer.

We all often unknowingly say things which are not true, but that is not lying. A false statement is a lie only if intentional. To lie unknowingly is a contradiction.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN HICKS,
17 Montagu Square, W1H 1RD.
mandjhicks@btinternet.com
January 7.

From the Reverend Dr Peter Cameron

Sir, The only appropriate answer to the question "Have you ever unknowingly told a lie?" is the one Mr Gromyko is reputed to have given to a journalist who asked him at a summit conference if he had had a good breakfast:

"Possibly."

Yours faithfully,
PETER CAMERON,
St Mary's Rectory, Birnam,
Dunkeld, Perthshire PH8 0BJ.
January 8.



COURT CIRCULAR

SANDRINGHAM HOUSE
January 12: Mrs Christian Adams has succeeded The Hon Mary Morrison as Lady in Waiting to The Queen.

ST JAMES'S PALACE
January 12: The Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, this morning received the Secretary of the Duchy of Cornwall, Mr Robert Ross.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
January 12: The Prince Edward, Patron, Ocean Youth Club, this evening attended the London International Boat Show at Earls Court, London SW5.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
January 12: The Princess Royal, President, Animal Health Trust, this evening attended a Dinner at Arley Hall, Knutsford, Cheshire and was received by Viscount Ashbrook JP (Vice Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire).

KENSINGTON PALACE
January 12: The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon, President, The Guide Association, held a Reception at Kensington Palace this afternoon following the presentation of Brooches to those who have become Queen's Guides.

Today's royal engagements

The Princess Royal will present the Institution of Incorporated Engineers Young Woman Engineer of the Year Award 1998 at the Royal Society of Arts, John Adam Street, London, WC2 at 11.20; and as president, Royal Yachting Association, will attend a luncheon at the London International Boat Show, Earls Court, SW5, at 12.45. Later, as president, British Knitting and Clothing Export Council, she will attend the British Apparel Export Awards at the Royal Lancaster Hotel, London W2.

Birthdays today

Mr Craigie Aitchison, painter, 73; Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, former Premier of Queensland, 88; Mr Richard Blackford, composer, 45; Mr Michael Bond, author and creator of Paddington Bear, 73; Dr Sydney Brenner, CH, FRS, molecular biologist, 72; Sir John Caines, civil servant, 66; *Mr Edward* Crew, Chief Constable, West Midlands, 53; the Earl of Essex, 79; Mr Stephen Glover, former Editor, *The Independent on Sunday*, 47; Mr Stephen Hendry, snooker player, 30; Professor Gordon McVie, director-general, Cancer Research Campaign, 54; Mr Ronan Rafferty, golfer, 35; Sir Colin Shepherd, former MP, 61; Mr Bernard Shrimsley, journalist, 68; Mr K.C. Turpin, former Vice-Chancellor, Oxford University, 84.

Anniversaries

BIRTHS: Jan van Goyen, landscape painter, Leiden, The Netherlands, 1596; Charles Perrault, writer and collector of folk tales, Paris, 1628.

DEATHS: Edmund Spenser, poet, London, 1599; George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends, London, 1691; James Macknight, biblical critic, Edinburgh, 1800; John Scott, 1st Earl of Eldon, Lord Chancellor 1801-06 and 1807-27, London, 1838; Fabian Bellinghausen, polar explorer, Russia, 1852; *Stephen* Collins Foster, songwriter, New York, 1864; Sir John Seeley, historian, Cambridge, 1895; James Joyce, novelist, Zurich, 1941; Hubert Humphrey, American Vice-President 1965-69, Waverley, Minnesota, 1978.

Nasa selected its first women astronauts, 1978

Dinners

Millennium Bridge

Mr Nick Raynsford, MP, Minister for London, was the principal guest and speaker at a dinner held last night at the Globe Theatre to mark the start of work on the Millennium Bridge. Sir Norman Foster, OM, and Mr David Bell also spoke. Among those present were:

The Bishop of London and Mrs Chartres, the Bishop of Southwark and Mrs Butler, Lord Alexander of Weedon, QC, and Lady Alexander, Lord and Lady Sainsbury of Turville, Mr Simon Hughes, MP, the Hon Sir Nicholas Serota, Sir Anthony and Lady Caro, Lady Foster, Mr Simon Jenkins and Miss Gayle Hunnicutt, Brigadier and Mrs Robert Acworth, Mr Colin Amery.

Mrs David Bell, Mr and Mrs John Bond, Mr and Mrs Michael Cassidy, Mr and Mrs Roger Dancey, Mr and Mrs Stuart Lipton, Dr and Mrs Duncan Michael, the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral and Mrs Moses, Mr and Mrs Stephen O'Brien, Mr Malcolm Reading, Mr and Mrs Albert Scardino, the Provost of Southwark and Mrs Slee, Mr and Mrs Hugh Stevenson, Mr and Mrs John Tusa, the Prime Warden of the Goldsmiths' Company and Mrs Vanderpump and representatives of other companies and bodies connected with the Millennium Bridge.

St Edmund Hall, Oxford

Mr Dudley Wood, president of the St Edmund Hall Association, was in the chair at the association's London dinner held last night at Over-Seas House, St James's. Mr J P D Dunbabin, vice-principal of St Edmund Hall, Mr Justin Gosling, Hon Fellow and Mr Nigel Pegram, *president of the junior common* room were the principal guests.

Narrowing the gap in arts and crafts

By Dalya Alberge
ARTS CORRESPONDENT

CLOTHES that no one could ever wear, because they are made of porcelain and wood, are among works of art that will be shown in an exhibition challenging perceptions about the fine and applied arts.

Janice Blackburn, the award-winning curator of the exhibition opening at Sotheby's in London next month, is determined "to show that there is a much narrower gap" than some might think. "The big difference is in terms of pride," she said, expressing despair at artists, fine art galleries and collectors who look down on the decorative arts as "craft" — "old fashioned, outdated, something that smacks of open-toed sandals and hanging baskets".

Real dresses dipped and preserved in porcelain by Tiziana Bendall-Brunello, or gowns sculpted in wood by Victoria Metcalf, she said, are *no less conceptual than the* work of Cornelia Parker, shortlisted last year for the Tate Gallery's Turner Prize for works that included displaying a man's white shirt on a coat-hanger and dangling bits of cutlery from the White Cliffs of Dover. "Craft can be challenging, as well as beautiful and functional."

She spoke of the difference of attitude among artists, dealers and collectors. "People *who make things have to* struggle more. In a sense they are much more accessible. People who do fine art feel they don't have to discuss their work with anybody ... What this means is that people are missing out on an opportunity to buy great work. So-called contemporary collectors think there is a stigma attached to it. Craft is a stumbling block to collecting."

Ms Bendall-Brunello, who came to Britain from Italy ten years ago, described her porcelain clothes as "conceptual" — "yet I use a media that is porcelain, associated with tableware". It depends how you use it, she said. Producing porcelain clothes was a way of freezing something in time, which one could not do with a fabric. At the same time, it produced an evocative image.

The exhibition, which runs from February 4 to 11, mixes recent graduates — the Scottish art schools are among the most prominent — with more established artists.



FINDLAY KEMBER

Tiziana Bendall-Brunello working on one of her dresses in her Cambridge studio

Forthcoming marriages

Mr M.R.M. Banham and Miss B.S.G. Meyer

The engagement is announced between Mark Richard Middlecott, son of Sir John and Lady Banham, of St Buryan, Cornwall, and Birgitta Sarah Grace, daughter of Mr and Mrs Carl H.A. Meyer, of Harborne, Birmingham.

Mr M.J. Burns and Miss F.D. Smedley

The engagement is announced, from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, between Michael, son of the late Mr Bruce Burns and of Mrs Fay Burns, of Cullinan, South Africa, and Fiona, daughter of Mr and Mrs Derek Smedley, of Lilley, Hertfordshire.

Mr D.G.L. Cleary and Miss E.K. Gilbey

The engagement is announced between Damian Geoffrey Lissant, son of Mr Anthony Cleary, of Ashow, Warwickshire, and of Mrs Georgina Macqueen, of Graffham, West Sussex, and Emma Kaye, daughter of Mr and Mrs John Gilbey, of Guestling, East Sussex.

Mr P.R. Dickinson and Miss J.B.M. Turnbull

The engagement is announced between Piers, elder son of Mr William Dickinson, of Corbridge, Northumberland, and Mrs Roger Harrison-Topham, of Coverdale, North Yorkshire, and Joanna, only daughter of Mr and Mrs Anthony Turnbull, of Surbiton, Surrey.

Captain G.R. Francke, PWRR, and Miss M.J. Bainbridge

The engagement is announced between Giles, son of Mr and Mrs John Francke, of Chelwood Gate, Sussex, and *Magdalena, daughter* of Mr and Mrs Bryan Bainbridge, of Eastbourne, Sussex.

Mr C.R. Hamilton and Miss F.D. Edwards

The engagement is announced between Charles, son of Major and *Mrs Charles Hamilton, of Ham*wood, Co Meath, Eire, and Francesca, daughter of Mrs Edwards and the late Major Richard Edwards, of Haslemere, Surrey.

Mr S.R. Hawker and Miss J.E. Imbert

The engagement is announced between Stuart, eldest son of Mr and Mrs R. Hawker, of Upminster, Essex, and Joanne, only daughter of Mr and Mrs Peter Imbert, of Hutton, Essex.

Mr Q.S. Holland and Miss L.M. Pollen

The engagement is announced between Quinton, son of Mr Brian Holland and Mrs Nicki Holland, and Louise, youngest daughter of Viscountess Sidmouth and the late Mr Francis Pollen.

Dr C.R. Jasparro and Miss V.L. Liardet

The engagement is announced between Christopher, son of Dr and Mrs R.J. Jasparro, of Providence, Rhode Island, USA, and Victoria, elder daughter of Mr A.J. Liardet, of Eastcott, Wiltshire, and Mrs *S.M. Reinschreiber*, of Aurora, Ohio, USA.

Mr W.D. Kelly and Miss S.M.R. Cairns

The engagement is announced between *William David, son of Mr* and Mrs William Kelly, of Dublin, and Sarah Marjory Russell, only daughter of Mr and Mrs William Cairns, of Edinburgh.

Mr N.A.P. Kent and Miss J.L. Bailey

The engagement is announced between Nicholas, youngest son of Mr and Mrs Kenneth J. Kent, of Moor Park, Farnham, Surrey, and Jane, daughter of Mr and Mrs Ronald G. Bailey, of Guildford, Surrey.

Mr J.D. Reed and Miss J.E.L.D. Conran-Smith

The engagement is announced between Jonathan, eldest son of Mr and Mrs Robert Reed, of Haywards Heath, and Jillie, elder daughter of Mr David Conran-Smith and the late Mrs Rosie Conran-Smith, of Clocksbriggs, Angus.

Mr R.W. Reed and Miss K. Mutic

The engagement is announced between Rupert, younger son of the late Mr Arthur Reed and of Mrs Reed, of London, SW1, and Katarina, daughter of Mr and Mrs Roduljub Mutic, of Valjevo, Yugoslavia.

Mr R.C.W. Rucker and Miss S.M. Peel

The engagement is announced between Rupert, son of Brigadier and Mrs James Rucker, of Ashmore, Dorset, and Susie, daughter of Mr and Mrs Peter Peel, of Hassop, Derbyshire.

Captain J.R.C. Seale and Miss L.F. Cowling

The engagement is announced between Captain Jonathan Seale, The Royal Dragoon Guards, son of the late C.O'M.H. Seale and of Mrs Seale, of Fleet, Hampshire, and Lynne Frances, daughter of Mr and Mrs C.F. Cowling, of Malmesbury, Wiltshire.

Mr T.J. Vaughan-Hughes and Miss C.A. Stigter

The engagement is announced between Timothy, only son of Mr and Mrs John Vaughan-Hughes, of London, and Corene, younger *daughter* of Mr and Mrs John Stigter, of Sydney, Australia.

Mr A.M.S. Wedderburn and Miss K.J. Watson

The engagement is announced between Michael, third son of Mr and Mrs Andrew Wedderburn, of Mountquhanie, Cupar, Fife, and Kathryn, elder daughter of Dr and Mrs Gavin Watson, of Paisley, Renfrewshire.

University news

Peterhouse, Cambridge

The Rev Jonathan Ben Quash (Peterhouse and Fitzwilliam College) has been elected Dean, *Chaplain, Catechist and Official* Fellow at Peterhouse, Cambridge.

School announcements

Bedstone College

Spring Term began on Monday. The College will host the Midlands *ISA Cross Country* Championships on Wednesday, February 3, and the College production of *Grease* will take place in the Rees Hall Theatre on March 18, 19 and 20. Scholarship and Entrance Examinations take place on Monday, March 1. Half term commences after the Fifth and Sixth year Parents' Consultation on Saturday, February 13, to 6pm on Wednesday, February 17. Term ends on Saturday, March 27.

Eton College

Eton College opens today for the Lent Half. P.N. Morley Fletcher KS continues as Captain of the School and C.P.W. Fielding OS as Captain of the Oppidans.

The examination for Junior Scholarships will be held on January 30 and the examination and interviews for Sixth Form Scholarships on February 12 and 13. The Business Conference starts on February 22, and Long Leave will be from February 25 to March 1. There will be services of Confirmation in College Chapel, conducted by the Visitor, the Bishop of Lincoln, on March 13 and 14. School closes on March 24.

Hurstpierpoint College

Lent Term started on Sunday, January 10. 150th Anniversary celebrations begin this term with an Inaugural Service conducted by the Visitor, the Bishop of Chichester, on Sunday, January 17. The Shakespeare Society present *Coriolanus* between March 10 and 13. Woodard Lectures take place on January 14, February 9 and March 16. Later in the year, all former pupils are invited to attend the Old Johnian Reunions which for pre 1960 members will be on Saturday, May 1, for 1961-1980 on Saturday, May 22 and for 1981-1998 on Saturday, June 12.

For further information of these and all other Sesquicentennial events, including dinners and Gala Ball, ring Mr Nicholas Searls on 01273 835331.

Merchant Taylors' School

Term begins today and ends on Friday, March 26. The Duologues Competitions take place in the Studio Theatre on Wednesday, February 10. The School Concert is at Merchant Taylors' Hall at 6.45pm on Monday, March 8, and the Orchestral and Choral Concert *takes place in the Great Hall* on Monday, March 22. *The Visit* by Frederick Durrenmatt will be performed from March 18-20 in the Studio Theatre. Jamie Lane is Captain of Hockey, and the XI tours Belgium at half-term. The School hosts the regional finals of the European Youth Parliament competition on February 24. PHAB week begins on March 27.

Royal Russell School, Croydon

A reunion for Old Russsellians who were at Ballards or Russell Hill Schools will be held on Saturday, May 8, 1999. For details please telephone 0181 657 4433.

St Margaret's School, Bushey

The Spring Term at St Margaret's School, Bushey, begins today and ends on March 26. Charlotte Bunn continues as Head Girl and Aziza Kassam as the Deputy Head Girl. This year marks the 250th Anniversary of the foundation of the school. The Right Rev D. Farmbrough is the speaker at a service to launch the Thanksgiving Celebrations on the first day of term. There will be a 1749 Day for pupils on February 12 and a Dinner for *former Head Girls of the School* on March 20. Her Majesty's Band of the Royal Marines, Portsmouth, will give a concert in the school grounds on May 15 and Speech Day will be on July 9. The main Service of Thanksgiving will be held at St Paul's Cathedral at 2.30pm on St Margaret's Day, Tuesday, November 16.

Wymondham College, Norfolk

Term started *on January 11* at the College and building work has started on the new Elm teaching block for English, History and Religious Studies. This term's drama production will be part of the National Theatre Schools Competition which the College has been invited to enter. The History department will be taking students to visit Normandy and the D-Day Landing Beaches at half term. The GCSE Geography trip is to take place at the end of term and the students will visit Spain. The Service of Confirmation will take place in the College Chapel with Right Rev Malcolm Menin officiating on Sunday, March 21. The Principal will take up his By Fellowship at Churchill College, Cambridge. Open Days for this term will be held on the Saturday *mornings of February 6, March* 20, May 8 and June 12.

OBITUARIES

NAOMI MITCHISON

Naomi Mitchison, CBE, author, died on January 11 at her home on the Mull of Kintyre aged 101. She was born in Edinburgh on November 1, 1897.

Naomi Mitchison, who lived almost right through the century, may justifiably be seen as one of its exemplary representatives. She was born a Victorian, and in a long and varied life she played many parts, filling each moment to the brim.

Naomi Mary Margaret Haldane came from a remarkable Scottish family. Her uncle was R. B. Haldane (Lord Haldane of Cloan), the Liberal and then Labour Lord Chancellor; her father was the physiologist and philosopher J. S. Haldane; her mother was the formidable hostess Kathleen Trotter; her brother (her first and greatest love) was the pioneering geneticist J. B. S. Haldane. She grew up in Oxford, where her father was a fellow of New College, and was educated at the Oxford Preparatory School (later the Dragon School), at home, and then at the Society of Oxford Home Students (later St Anne's College).

She showed promise in botany but was never able to obtain any qualifications or practise any profession, though she studied widely and was particularly impressed by the work of Jung and James Fraser. Brought up in a privileged but restricted background, she had difficulty freeing herself from dependence on her parents and the conventions of her class.

But everything was changed by the First World War. In 1915 she worked as a nurse at St Thomas' Hospital in London and the John Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford, and in 1916 she married her brother's friend Gilbert Richard (Dick) Mitchison, a lawyer five years older than herself who was serving in the Army in France. He was severely wounded in action but she nursed him back to health: he began his career, and she began a family. After the war they lived in London, where he worked as a barrister and she worked as a mother but also as a writer, and they formed the nucleus of a largely left-wing intellectual circle.

She was an active, early supporter of birth control — helping to run the North Kensington Clinic and speaking and writing on the subject — but joyfully, if painfully, she had seven children over 22 years. She suffered bitter loss; her first son died from meningitis (cruelly described in Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point*), and her last daughter died soon after birth (gently described in her memoirs). She also enjoyed sweet success: her other three sons became distinguished scientists — one introduced her to James Watson, and she helped to edit *The Double Helix*, which was dedicated to her — and her other two daughters both became writers. She later had many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and gave her recreation in *Who's Who* as "keeping up with the family" (later replaced by "surviving so far").

Her marriage was happy but not entirely satisfactory, despite help from the books of Marie Stopes, and both she and her husband entered into several other relationships, which were conducted with dignity and described with humour. As the Second World War approached they moved to Carradale House in Kintyre, which became her base for the rest of her life, and where she farmed her land, entertained guests and took an active part in local and regional affairs.

She was a radical in religion and politics, and went further than her agnostic parents (if not as far as her brother's militant atheism), joining the Rationalist Press Association, and becoming a director of the shortlived paper of scientific humanism, *The Realist* (1929). Her mother was a Conservative and her father a Liberal, and although she began as the former she moved through the latter to socialism (if not as far as her brother's militant communism). She supported the League of Nations Union, and eventually joined the Labour Party and the Fabian Society.



She was involved in the work of Tom Harrisson's Mass-Observation from its beginning in 1937. She supported the Popular Front but was never a fellow-traveller, and sometimes insisted that she was really a liberal or even an anarchist at heart. She stood unsuccessfully for the Scottish Universities seat in 1935, and served on the Argyll County Council on and off from 1945 to 1965. She proved a loyal supporter of her husband as a Labour candidate from 1931, MP from 1945, and life peer from 1964 until his death in 1970 (though she characteristically refused to be called Lady Mitchison). She also supported the Scottish Nationalists, became vice-chairman of the non-party Scottish Convention, and served on the Highland and Island Advisory Panel and then on the Highlands and Islands Development Consultative Council from 1947 to 1976.

She accepted the need for fighting in the two world wars and the Spanish Civil War, though she hated what it entailed, but she objected to the reliance on nuclear weapons in the Cold War, and she supported the Authors' World Peace Appeal in the 1950s, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the 1960s, and the Greenham Common women in the 1980s. She became unpopular with some local people for her opposition to the nuclear submarine base in Holy Loch, not far from her home, which brought employment to many.

Later in life she became unexpectedly involved in the politics of southern Africa. In 1963 she was invited by her friend Linchwe, who had become the chief of the Bakgatla tribe in Bechuanaland (later Botswana), to become his adoptive mother. She accepted the position of Tribal Mother with enthusiasm, putting into practice what she had written about, and went on visiting the tribe into her nineties.

But Naomi Mitchison was best known as a prolific and popular writer. During a literary career of seventy years she contributed thousands of articles and letters to scores of papers, and produced books at a rate of more than one a year. She made her name with historical novels: *The Conquered* (1923), about the Roman conquest of Gaul, brought her appointment as Officier de l'Académie Française, *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* (1931), an ambitious treatment of cultural and sexual conflict in Ancient Greece and Scythia, earned admiration from both critics and readers, and *The Bull Calves* (1947) drew on her Scottish roots.

She also wrote poetry and drama, but was discouraged by the reaction of other poets and dramatists. She wrote biographies. She wrote modern fiction: *We Have Been Warned* (1935) was censored by her publishers and censured by the reviewers for its sexual and political frankness, but stands as what she called a "historical novel about my own times". She edited factual symposiums: *An Outline for Boys and Girls and Their Parents* (1932) became a secular bible for many progressive families, though *What the Human Race is Up To* (1962) was less successful. She wrote children's books and science fiction: *Travel Light* (1952) and *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962) became classics. She wrote books about Scotland which contributed to the Scottish literary renaissance, and books about Africa which were banned by the South African Government. She wrote practical philosophy: *Socrates* (1937, with R. H. S. Crossman) and *The Moral Basis of Politics* (1938) were both straightforward expositions of the decent life.

In later years she produced a series of books based on her diaries and letters, starting with documentary records — *Vienna Diary* (1934) — but more fully developed in *Mucking Around* (1980) and *Among You Taking Notes* (1985). There were also more impressionistic works such as *Small Talk* (1973). Taken together all these books form a remarkable account of her era. She was an active member of PEN and president of the Saltire Society.

Naomi Mitchison was above all a feminist — though she often repudiated the term — who fought hard in private and then in public for the right of herself and other women to take a full part in all aspects of private and public life. Her literary work was saturated with feminist considerations, though she never finished "The Intelligent Women's Guide Through Feminism" which she began in the 1930s. She was recognised by the later women's movement as one of its heroines. Several of her books were reprinted by feminist publishers, and this is probably how she will be best remembered.

She should also, however, be remembered for her living presence. She was an extrovert who exposed her weaknesses as well as her strengths to an often hostile public, a rationalist who suffered from nightmares and panics, wept as much as she laughed, and started physical as well as verbal fights, a humanist who sympathised with religion and ritual, a radical who turned down an OBE but accepted appointment as CBE in 1985, a reformer who always stressed "what people really want" and never forgot the importance of fun. She wrote near the end of her long life, "But the bright vision fades, always, always," — though she added, "We wait for a new wave of hope."

She leaves three sons, all Fellows of the Royal Society, and two daughters.

BRIAN MOORE

Brian Moore, novelist, died in California on January 11 aged 77. He was born in Belfast on August 25, 1921.

Few successful novelists are as little-known as Brian Moore. A modest, retiring man, he made his name almost by stealth. There were no massive bestsellers, no headline-grabbing advances; just a steady stream of books, one every couple of years. Heedless of fashion, he wrote taut, well-crafted, thoughtful fictions, remarkable glimpses into unremarkable lives. They won him a reputation as "a writer's writer": Graham Greene once called him his favourite living novelist; another admirer was Kingsley Amis. But readers liked him too, for few writer's writers have been as readable as Moore.

He was a hard man to pin down. "I live in a sort of writing limbo," he once said. "No one seems able to place me." He moved easily between subjects and genres. His career began with pseudonymous thrillers, and he later wrote the screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain*. He remained a master of quiet suspense, able to render unsettling the most humdrum scene. Some of his best works, such as *The Colour of Money*, shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1987, and *Lies of Silence*, shortlisted three years later, are nail-biting thrillers, however much else they might be besides.

In life, as in his writing, he was at once approachable and elusive. Witty, charming and unassuming, his only obvious vanity a fondness for handmade English suits, he was always happy to talk. But he relished the privacy of self-imposed exile.

Wherever he was, he felt like an outsider. Having left his native Belfast in the Second World War, he never lived there again, taking Canadian citizenship before settling in California. Ireland and its conflicts were present in almost all his books, though he seldom wrote of them directly.



His own background was republican and Catholic; both faiths were to fascinate him all his life, but he subscribed to neither. Belief and its absence, and the crises either may provoke, are his central themes. "In nearly all my novels," he observed, "I'm interested in the point in a person's life where whatever it is that they wanted or believed in — ambition, political or religious belief — is suddenly taken away from them, and they are forced to re-examine their lives up till then."

Brian (pronounced "Bree-an") Moore was the fourth child of a family of nine. His father was a surgeon, and a friend of Roger Casement. An uncle was the first commander-in-chief of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, forerunner of the IRA, and became Minister of Education in the Irish Free State. Two of Moore's brothers became doctors. He himself was educated at Catholic schools and then at St Malachi's College, Belfast. But he did not go on to university: war broke out, and he became an ARP first-aid worker and then a fireman during the air raids on Belfast. In 1943 he left for North Africa as a civilian employee of the British Ministry of War Transport. From 1945 to 1947 he was in Poland with a UN economic mission.

In 1947 he left for Canada and became a proof reader for the *Montreal Gazette*. He spoke of this as a time of uncertainty, and felt himself to have failed. The experience fed his fiction: he was always more interested in failure than success; it gave, he thought, "a more intense distillation" of a person's true self.

In 1955 he published *Judith Hearne* (before this he had published two thrillers as Michael Bryan; two more followed in 1956 and 1958). Called *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* in America, and later republished under that title in Britain, it was a sensitive study of an alcoholic old maid in Belfast who sees her last chance of love destroyed. It was notable for its compassion and its refusal to sentimentalise. It was the first of the intimate female portraits at which Moore was to excel.

Moore followed *Judith Hearne* with *The Feast of Lupercal* (1957), about a shy schoolmaster. *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* (1960) had another failure as its subject — an Irishman in Montreal. Other books followed steadily, many drawing on Moore's own life, and some dealing explicitly with the problems of religious faith. Not all were equally well received, though the autobiographical *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* (1965) was praised for its restraint, and the sombre anti-clerical novella *Catholics* (1973) met with acclaim (except from the Church) and was later seen on British television in Moore's own adaptation.

If Moore's themes remained constant, his later work showed an increasingly wide range of settings and styles. *The Great Victorian Collection* (1975) was a Californian fantasy of dreams come true. *The Mangan Inheritance* (1979) introduced an element of macabre romance to the story of a failed Irish poet. *Black Robe* (1983) was about a Jesuit missionary in 17th-century Quebec. *The Colour of Blood* (1987) was a Cold War thriller, *Lies of Silence* an equally gripping treatment of terrorist violence in Northern Ireland. *No Other Life* (1993) was a vivid study of tyranny, set in the Caribbean. *The Magician's Wife* (1997) deals with relations between Islam and the West. It was the nineteenth novel of his forty-year career.

Moore was twice married. His second wife Jean, whom he married in 1966, survives him with their son.

JIM PETERS

Jim Peters, marathon runner, died on January 9 aged 80. He was born on October 24, 1918.

Jim Peters broke the marathon record four times in the 1950s, but will always be remembered most for one of the most dramatic and poignant failures of modern athletics. Even younger and less sentimental sports followers wince when shown film of the Calvary endured by Peters in the Commonwealth Games in Vancouver in 1954, after he entered the stadium at the end of the marathon with an astonishing lead of some three miles over the rest of the field.

After setting his usual fast pace, despite the humidity and shade temperature of around 75F, the 35-year-old was suffering from severe dehydration and began to stagger. He then fell more than half a dozen times, even crawling on all fours as he tried but failed to complete the last lap of the track to the finish.

"I was completely bewildered," he recalled, "but I just didn't want to disgrace my wife and kiddies. I kept falling down but I remembered from the Games' six miles [in which he had won a bronze medal] that it was definitely cooler under the shadow of the big stand. As I staggered to my feet once more I tried to move to the shade. Then someone grabbed hold of me and I passed out. Later, in the dressing room, I became conscious for a few minutes and found a nurse bending over me. 'Did I win?' I asked her anxiously. She smiled down at me. 'You did very well,' she said."

For the rest of his life he was convinced that he had been robbed of the gold medal because, he argued, the course was nearly half a mile too long. Days before the race, Peters, his team manager and his England team-mate Stan Cox (who also failed to finish, after sunstroke caused him to collide with a lamp-post), had travelled the course by car and found it was nearly 27 miles.

Retiring from athletics after Vancouver, Peters unexpectedly received a Games gold medal on Christmas Eve 1954, inscribed from the Duke of Edinburgh: "As a token of admiration to a most gallant marathon runner." Just before his 80th birthday Peters, who had battled against cancer for several years, was touched to receive a letter of best wishes from the Duke.



Jim Peters staggering in the Vancouver marathon's last lap, which he could not finish despite his huge lead

Born at Homerton but then moving with his parents to Becontree, Jim Peters virtually had two separate athletics careers. The first began as a schoolboy footballer and cricketer in Essex, where he once took the wicket of a contemporary known as "Darkie" Alf Ramsey.

Though a junior mile champion of his county, Peters was deprived of the chance to develop in the sport by the outbreak of the Second World War, when he joined the RAMC. But when he was demobbed in 1945, with a wife and young child and work as a dispensing optician, he still wanted to run again. He went on to win the Essex cross-country title over seven miles and the county three miles on the track in 1946. Though an outsider, he then became the AAA six-miles champion at White City, winning by a wide margin.

He was AAA 10-miles champion in 1947, but in the 1948 Olympic 10,000 metres at Wembley he finished a disappointing ninth and might have retired. But on the train back from Wembley, his new coach, "Johnny" Johnston, pushed aside such thoughts, saying, "If you want to run in another Olympic Games, old boy, it will have to be in the marathon."

The partnership, involving daily training and speed sessions, both innovative at the time, was to transform international marathon racing. Peters set a British best from Windsor to Chiswick in the Polytechnic Marathon in 1951 and, a year later, broke the all-time record by nearly five minutes, with a time of 2 hours 20 minutes 42.2 seconds.

He dropped out of the 1952 Helsinki Olympic marathon with severe cramp, but had his finest year in 1953. The winner of no fewer than four top-class marathons, he reduced the record twice more. Then with his fourth Polytechnic victory, in 1954, he stopped the watches at 2 hours 17 minutes 39.4 seconds which was to remain the world's best for the distance for four years.

These feats must be put in perspective. Peters was an amateur who fitted his exhausting training around his career as an optician. He raced wearing simple Dunlop gym shoes. "Modern sport shoes are so expensive," he said recently, "that I could probably have only afforded one of them."

His upper body action was so unwieldy — he hummed Al Jolson to himself to cope with the tedium — that he has been called "the first rock'n'roll athlete". Race photos prove that sometimes his arm action across his body was so pronounced that his thumb nail driving across his chest caused it to bleed through his running vest.

Reflecting on his running in 1996, Peters said: "We were the good, old-fashioned amateurs but the modern, well-paid athletes, good luck to them all. still have our old spirit. When the gun sounds you go out there to kill or be killed." Jim Peters is survived by his wife Frieda, a daughter and a son.

ON THIS DAY

January 13, 1916

Trains in the First World War; aeroplanes in the Second. No obstacle could stand in the way of the advancement of the gentler sex

WOMEN DRIVING TRAMWAY CARS

BY A CORRESPONDENT

I have been watching a woman driving a tramway car through Glasgow's most crowded streets. I did not know that they had "allowed" women to drive their cars in Glasgow, and so the sight took me by surprise. It suggested an experiment at first, and one is rather loth to be experimented upon. But after half an hour this idea vanished.

During the first few moments, I will confess, the arguments against employing women on work of this kind were unpleasantly obtrusive. I remembered that, according to reliable authorities, women are unfitted to cope with an emergency demanding rapid decisions. They lack the nervous force which is a man's reservoir of strength in the evil hour; they are apt to "lose their heads"; they tend to respond too violently to excitement. The car came to a standstill in a traffic block while I was turning over these ideas, and I was aware suddenly that this event had taken place in a manner so nicely regulated that there was no sort of jolt or jar. It had not been thus on a man-driven car I had ridden in a short time before.

The car started again, too, in most gentle fashion, as though it was learning good manners from its driver and was anxious to do her credit. Then, as we were running along a well-known thoroughfare, a taxicab shot out from a side street just in front of the car. It looked for a moment as though something was bound to happen, and I saw several of the passengers casting anxious glances at the trim, green-clad figure on the other side of the glass door. The girl disappointed their fears: with a quick movement she cut off the power and applied the brakes. It was well judged, for without inflicting undue discomfort on its freight, the car slowed down just sufficiently to allow the taxicab to pass, and then seemed to get into its stride again almost automatically.

That incident banished the arguments against employing women as drivers. But it brought other thoughts to mind. This girl, clearly, was not only able to drive her car, she was an exceedingly good and careful driver. She was a better driver than many of the men in the same service, because she spared her passengers and her vehicle. Her mind and interest seemed to be in the business. There was no hurry or excitement about her handling of the car; on the contrary, she remained quite calm, though alert.

NEWS

Workfare testing for benefits

All benefit claimants, including the disabled and lone parents will be denied any state help unless they attend job interviews under radical reforms to be announced by the government today. All claimants of working age, except the disabled and lone parents will then have to take up a job offer or face losing their entire benefit under proposals which take Britain a step closer to American Workfare........Page 1

Rebels torch African capital

Hundreds of Ukrainian mercenaries are fighting alongside Sierra Leone's rebels who made good on their promise to burn Freetown to the ground and torched the power station, post office, town hall and UN headquarters. peacekeepers continued to try to drive out the rebels and claimed that they were conducting "mopping up operations"........Pages 1,14

Kidnap trial

The leader of the Islamic kidnap gang who abducted 16 western tourists in a desert ambush is to go on trial for his life today in a court surrounded by high security........Pages 1, 5

Porn block

Schools are to be offered a powerful screening system developed by American space scientists which blocks pupils' access to Internet pornography even in otherwise innocent documents and e-mail messages........Page 1

Inquiry ignored

The Health Secretary Frank Dobson ignored the findings of a damning public inquiry report to reprieve the secure hospital at the centre of a paedophilia and pornography scandal........Page 2

Couple's letter

The couple on the run with their foster daughters have written an emotional letter from an unknown address pleading to be allowed to adopt the girls....Page 3

Erosion scare

The Government was told to act urgently to counter the danger of further coastal erosion, in the wake of the landslide at Beachy Head. Stretches of the east and south coasts could be the next to collapse as torrential rains and high waves continue to pound Britain........Page 6

Clarke's team

Two former government ministers — Kenneth Clarke and David Mellor — are on the teamsheet for the FA Premier League in its court battle to stop football clubs negotiating TV deals........Page 7

Labour wrath

The old Etonian former ambassador, Sir David Gore-Booth, mounted a robust defence after facing the wrath of two New Labour women MPs........Page 8

Landmine grants

The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund handed over more than £1 million to 13 landmine charities........Page 9

EU pressure

The European Commission was under pressure to sacrifice two of its members — Edith Cresson of France and Manuel Marin of Spain — as the price for averting a censure vote........Page 10

New victim

One of President Clinton's fiercest critics has became the latest victim of Larry Flynt, the pornographer........Page 11

Iraq attack

Amid growing tension in the Gulf an American F16 fighter fired on an Iraqi radar site in the northern no-fly zone, the sixth skirmish since the end of Operation Desert Fox........Page 14

Girl devises an internet code

An Irish girl was hailed as a mathematical genius after devising a new code for sending secret messages by computer. Sarah Flannery, 16,used the complicated science of cryptography to design a code ten times faster than the one currently used to convert confidential information so it can sent via the internet and e-mail........Page 1



A lifeboat is hauled 14 miles across Exmoor by RNLI volunteers to commemorate the rescue of a schooner's crew by *Louisa* in 1899

BUSINESS

Trade war: The US will ask the World Trade Organisation on January 25 to approve hefty sanctions against goods from the European Union in their long-running row over bananas........Page 23

Hangover: A profits warnings from Allied Domecq, the Beefeater Gin and pubs group, saw more than £850 million wiped off its stock market value........Page 23

Christmas cheer: Kingfisher, the retail group, was one of few on the high street to enjoy some Christmas cheer, with a 3.2 per cent sales rise over the period........Page 23

Markets: The FTSE 100 fell 51.40 to 6033.6. The pound fell 0.93 cents to \$1.6307 and 0.44p against the euro to 70.78p. The sterling index fell to 98.6, from 99.0........Page 26

SPORT

Football: Ian Wright, the West Ham and England striker, is likely to be absent for at least the next six weeks after collapsing in training and requiring surgery on an injured knee........Page 44

Tennis: Greg Rusedski suffered his second successive first-round defeat when he was beaten in three sets by Gustavo Kuerten in the Sydney International........Page 44

Rugby union: For the second successive month the Rugby Football Union has been found guilty of breaches of International Rugby Board regulations........Page 39

Simon Barnes: With the retirement of Michael Jordan the question must be asked: will we ever see his like again? The chances are pretty remote........Page 40

All grown up: Remember the malevolent nine-year-old Wednesday from the Addams films? Now Christina Ricci is a cynical 18-year-old with a new movie........Page 34

Southern belles: The South Bank Centre undoubtedly needs a facelift but the plans to demolish the Hayward Gallery, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room are causing alarm........Page 34

Sister act: Julia Sawalha, Alison Steadman and Samantha Bond play three warring siblings in Shelagh Stephenson's tragi-comic *The Memory of Water*........Page 35

Dramatic renaissance: The transformation of New York's 42nd Street, once peopled by drug dealers and porn moviegoers, now the heart of theatreland........Page 36

Monied junkies: The Marquess of Bristol was not the only heroin user with a vast inheritance........Page 17

Joanna Coles: "It is 9.30am and I am already birth-classed-out. You cannot have a baby in Manhattan without being bullied into attending dozens of classes. Maternity tours, interviews with obstetricians, prenatal and maternal fitness classes: I have obediently attended them all"........Page 17

Bugged: Can we ever win the war against super-bugs?........Page 16

Nigel Hawkes: A breakthrough for treating blindness in old people and how tuberculosis can provide clues for historians and for South Seas anthropologists........Page 16

Top site: One of London's great properties, 94 Piccadilly, known as the In and Out Club, is for sale. Have you £50 million?........Page 30

Sierra Leone is the world's largest producer of human misery. The UN estimates that some 440,000 have fled across the borders. As the fighting intensified hundreds of thousands abandoned their homes and joined the displaced. But what is worse is the terror. Rape and kidnapping have become commonplace — ***The Washington Post***

Preview: Girl power in the animal kingdom: *Battle of the Sexes* (BBC2, 8pm) **Review:** *Holby City* paints a rosier picture of the NHSD than Frank Dobson has been managing........Pages 42, 43

In Europe's name

It is better that there should be a short crisis than a European Commission shorn of credibility. MEPs should block their ears and vote for censure........Page 19

Yemen and Finsbury

Whether or not the Finsbury mosque is running training camps, it is disturbing that London should have become a significant centre for those calling for Islamic revolution........Page 19

Benefit of the doubt

Ministers will not find it easy to persuade the public that those who suffered during life in the Services are not more likely to endure deafness later........Page 19

SIMON JENKINS

Mr Blair makes John Major seem a Cicero and Mrs Thatcher a Demosthenes. I defy anyone to distil novelty from such waffle........Page 18

BRONWEN MADDOX

Mr Clinton may have no self-restraint but he is undeniably tough. His response when attacked is to keep going........Page 18

ALAN COREN

Well, the good news is that you may have 142 fewer days to drive yourself nuts at the prospect of January 1, 2000........Page 18

PETER RIDDELL

An answer would be to have an independent ethics commissioner who, with a small staff, would advise ministers and investigate any allegations of wrongdoing...Page 8

Naomi Mitchison, author; **Brian Moore,** novelist; **Jim Peters,** marathon runner........Page 21

High standards demanded of Robin Cook; origins of Paris; organ donors' consent; Blair and the Lib-Dems; nursing shortage; Beachy Head cliff fall; Hendrix v Segovia; Union Jack's future........Page 19

TOMORROW

IN THE TIMES

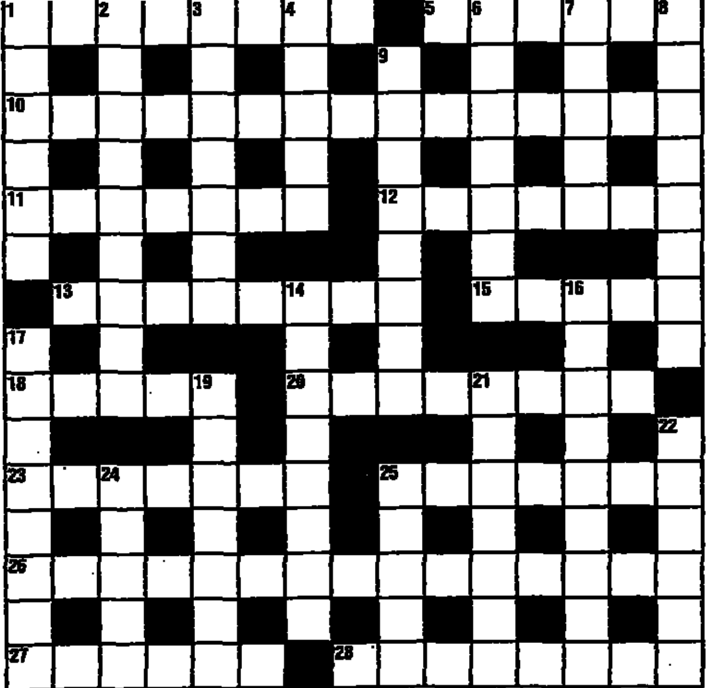
FILMS

■ Brad Pitt as the character Death who falls in love with Claire Forlani and life in *Meet Joe Black*

BOOKS

■ Paul Routledge's biography of Peter Mandelson is reviewed by John Grigg

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,999



ACROSS

1 In which contenders who've knocked out several others are matched (3,5).
5 European city cut by conflict (6).
10 US government organisation, say, to retire workers ahead of time (5,10).
11 Being agreeable, welcoming bridge opponents in friendship (7).
12 Island where I come ashore again? (7).
13 Space behind house that could do for dray (8).
15 This board carries out each step by both spirit and letter (5).
18 Here received characters ending life always? (5).
20 Rough ocean – it's liable to capsize one (8).
23 Fish that will quickly bite (7).
25 Learner winning at chess very quickly (7).
26 In which ads appear to offer business opportunity (10,5).
27 Not oil, but different liquid applied to body (6).
28 He was willing to benefit others by his death (8).

DOWN

1 Person sharing the bill, getting fruit, mostly (2-4).
2 One on board making consumer's position clear (5,4).
3 In dramatic epic, key equipment used by mountaineer (3-4).
4 Starts off paper by foolishly copying others (5).
6 Old style of trade-off by company (3,4).
7 City given another name when burnt (5).
8 Leave the field, having moderate result in match (8).
9 Herb and another fellow are in town (8).
14 A cold office in church – that's nice! (8).
16 Very rude about being broke (9).
17 Examination requiring no mental effort? (8).
19 Chief Superintendent somehow putting up with Morse (7).
21 Show in the same place briefly interrupting former success (7).
22 Middleman financially ruined king (6).
24 Allow to enter commercial American university (5).
25 Narrow miss smoothly faced after this? (5).

Times Two Crossword, page 44

Solution to Puzzle No 20,998

ACADEMIA PLENTY / SPECULATOR RAGE / DISCONSOLATE / MAIN ORTHODOX / TOLERATE DREW / BEWILDERMENT / MESS CRYPTOGRAM / ASLEEP LOWERING

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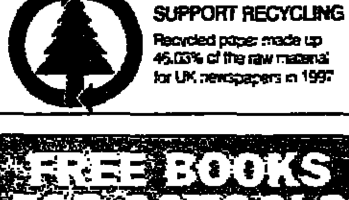
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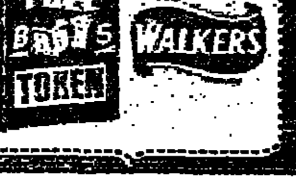
HOURS OF DARKNESS

Sun rises: 8.01 am
Sun sets: 4.17 pm
Moon sets: 1.23 pm
Moon rises: 3.54 am

New moon: January 17th

London 4.17 pm to 8.00 am
Bristol 4.27 pm to 8.10 am
Edinburgh 4.07 pm to 8.35 am
Manchester 4.16 pm to 8.18 am
Penzance 4.45 pm to 8.16 am





☐ *General: England and Wales will start* largely fine, but rain will soon reach the west and sweep across all areas during the morning and early afternoon. The rain will last a few hours before brighter weather spreads from the west.

Western Scotland and Northern Ireland will be windy with rain and mountain-snow in the morning, followed by sunshine and squally showers this afternoon. Eastern Scotland will start dry and cold, but rain and hill-snow will quickly spread from the west, although steadily clearing in the afternoon. The Irish Republic will start wet and windy but become brighter with blustery showers.

Tonight, Northern Ireland and western Scotland will be cold and very windy with squally wintry showers, perhaps giving blizzards over the mountains. The rest of the UK will be mainly dry with evening showers becoming confined to western coasts. A slight frost is likely in areas with shelter from the brisk wind.

☐ **London, SE England, E Anglia, Central S England, E Midlands, E England, Channel Islands:** a dry and bright start with a touch of frost, but cloud and rain will spread from the west, before it clears up again late in the day. A freshening southwest wind. *Max 9C (48F).*

☐ **W Midlands, SW England, S Wales, N Wales:** a band of rain will sweep in from the west this morning, but it will become brighter with just a few showers in the afternoon. Blustery southwest wind. Max 10C (50F).

☐ **NW England, Lake District, Isle of Man, Central N England, NE England:** a dry start but rain will quickly spread from the west, perhaps preceded by snow over the highest hills. The rain will give way to *sunny intervals and a few showers during* the afternoon. Blustery southwest wind. Max 7C (45F).

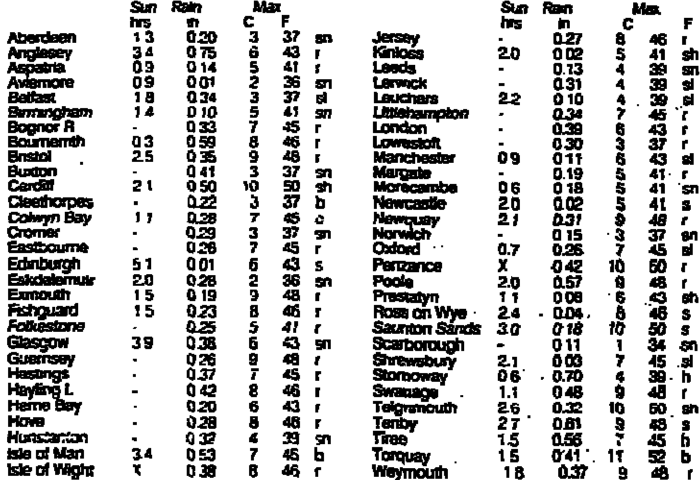
☐ **Borders, Edinburgh & Dundee, Aberdeen, Moray Firth, NE Scotland:** rain and hill-snow will arrive later in the morning, but it will brighten up before the end of the afternoon. Strengthening SW wind with gales possible in north later. Max 6C (43F).

☐ **S W Scotland, Glasgow, Central Highlands, Argyll, NW Scotland, N Ireland:** rain and hill-snow followed by squally wintry showers. Strong to gale westerly wind. Max 7C (45F).

☐ **Orkney, Shetland:** mostly dry at first, but rain will arrive later in the morning and not clear until the early evening. Fresh southwest wind, becoming very strong later. Max 5C (41F).

☐ **Republic of Ireland:** wet and windy morning, turning brighter with blustery showers during afternoon. Wind fresh or strong SW turning W. Max 11C (52F)

☐ **Outlook:** very unsettled and often windy with showers and longer spells of rain, especially in the north, where it will be cold enough for snow over the hills.



24 hrs to 5 pm: b=bright; c=cloud; d=drizzle; ds=dust storm; du=dull; f=fair; fg=fog; g=gales; h=hail; r=rain; sh=shower; sl=sleet; s=sun; t=thunder

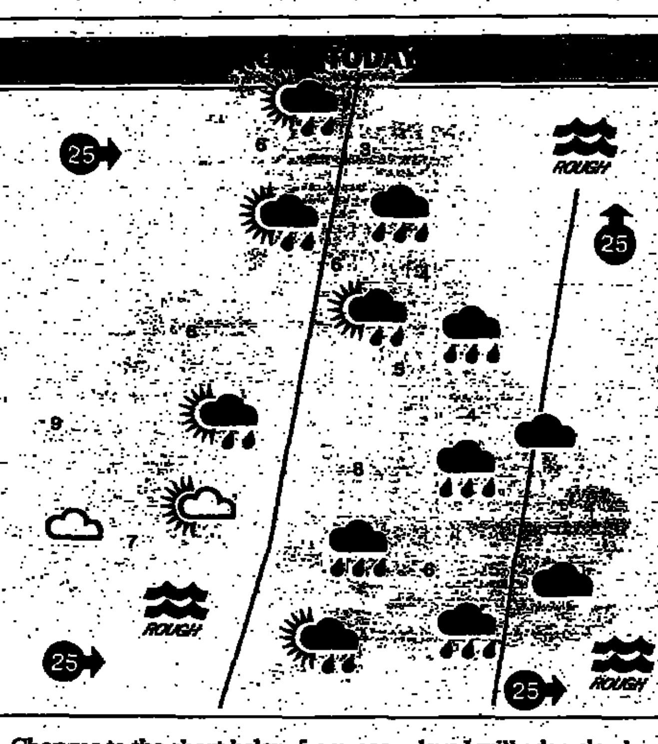
	Sun hrs	Rain in	Max C	F	
Aberdeen	1.3	0.20	3	37	sn
Anglesey	3.4	0.75	6	43	r
Aspatria	0.9	0.14	5	41	r
Aviemore	0.9	0.01	2	36	sn
Belfast	1.8	0.34	3	37	sl
Birmingham	1.4	0.10	5	41	sn
Bognor R	-	0.33	7	45	r
Bournemth	0.3	0.59	8	46	r
Bristol	2.5	0.35	9	48	r
Buxton	-	0.41	3	37	sn
Cardiff	2.1	0.50	10	50	sh
Cleethorpes	-	0.22	3	37	b
Colwyn Bay	1.7	0.28	7	45	c
Cromer	-	0.29	3	37	sn
Eastbourne	-	0.28	7	45	r
Edinburgh	5.1	0.01	6	43	s
Eskdalemuir	2.0	0.28	2	36	sn
Exmouth	1.5	0.19	9	48	r
Fishguard	1.5	0.23	8	46	r
Folkestone	-	0.25	5	41	r
Glasgow	3.9	0.38	6	43	sn
Guernsey	-	0.26	9	48	r
Hastings	-	0.37	7	45	r
Hayling I.	-	0.42	8	46	r
Herne Bay	-	0.20	6	43	r
Hove	-	0.28	8	46	r
Hunstanton	-	0.32	4	39	sn
Isle of Man	3.4	0.53	7	45	b
Isle of Wight	X	0.38	8	46	r
Jersey	-	0.27	8	46	r
Kinloss	2.0	0.02	5	41	sh
Leeds	-	0.13	4	39	sn
Lerwick	-	0.31	4	39	sl
Leuchars	2.2	0.10	4	39	sl
Littlehampton	-	0.34	7	45	r
London	-	0.39	6	43	r
Lowestoft	-	0.30	3	37	r
Manchester	0.9	0.11	6	43	sl
Margate	-	0.19	5	41	r
Morecambe	0.6	0.18	5	41	sn
Newcastle	2.0	0.02	5	41	s
Newquay	2.1	0.31	9	48	r
Norwich	-	0.15	3	37	sn
Oxford	0.7	0.26	7	45	sl
Penzance	X	0.42	10	50	r
Poole	2.0	0.57	9	48	r
Prestatyn	1.1	0.08	6	43	sh
Ross on Wye	2.4	0.04	8	46	s
Saunton Sands	3.0	0.18	10	50	s
Scarborough	-	0.11	1	34	sn
Shrewsbury	2.1	0.03	7	45	sl
Stornoway	0.6	0.70	4	39	h
Swanage	1.1	0.48	9	48	r
Teignmouth	2.6	0.32	10	50	sn
Tenby	2.7	0.81	9	48	s
Tiree	1.5	0.56	7	45	h
Torquay	1.5	0.41	11	52	b
Weymouth	1.8	0.37	9	48	r

ABROAD

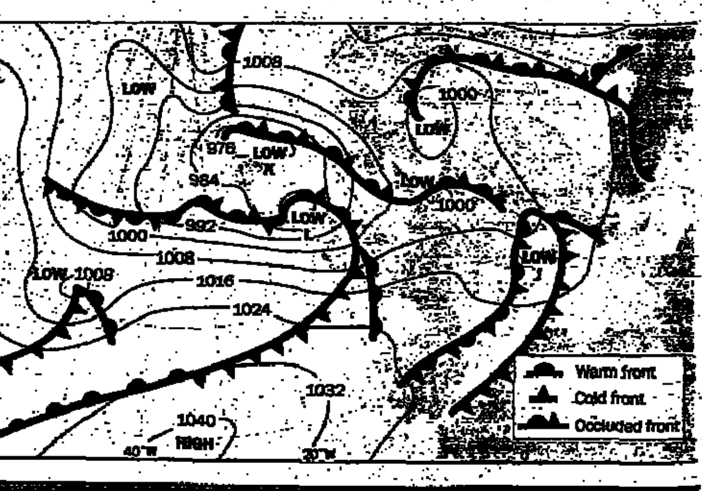
	C	F	
Ajaccio	10	50	c
Akrotiri	19	66	f
Alex'dria	19	66	s
Algiers	15	59	f
Amst'dm	1	34	s
Athens	16	61	f
Bahrain	20	68	s
Bangkok	30	86	f
Barbados	28	82	f
Barcelona	7	45	s
Beirut	17	63	s
Belgrade	6	43	s
Berlin	-1	30	c
Bermuda	19	66	r
Biarritz	3	37	f
Bordeaux	2	36	c
Brussels	-1	30	s
Budapest	1	34	r
B Aires	23	73	s
Beijing	-3	27	s
Cairo	20	68	s
Cape Tn	21	70	s
Chicago	-16	3	s
Ch'church	X		
Cologne	-1	30	sn
C'phagn	0	32	f
Corfu	16	61	f
Dublin	-3	27	f
Dubrovnik	11	52	r
Faro	9	48	f
Florence	8	46	r
Frankfurt	1	34	c
Funchal	12	54	f
Geneva	1	34	sn
Gibraltar	12	54	r
Helsinki	-11	12	c
Hong K	16	61	f
Innsbruck	3	37	f
Istanbul	12	54	f
Jeddah	23	73	f
Jo'burg	16	61	r
L Palmas	18	64	c
Le Touqt	3	37	f
Lisbon	7	45	r
Locarno	1	34	sl
L Angeles	17	63	s
Luxembg	-2	28	c
Luxor	23	73	s
Madrid	5	41	s
Majorca	12	54	f
Malaga	13	55	f
Malta	15	59	f
Melbourne	X		
Mexico C	16	61	s
Miami	22	72	s
Milan	4	39	f
Montreal	-18	3	s
Moscow	-12	10	sn
Munich	2	36	f
Nairobi	26	79	f
Naples	14	57	c
N Delhi	12	54	f
N York	-5	23	s
Nice	10	50	f
Oslo	-10	14	c
Paris	1	34	f
Perth	X		
Prague	2	36	c
Reykjavik	2	36	sl
Rhodes	18	64	f
Rio de J	28	82	s
Riyadh	16	61	s
Rome	14	57	f
Salzburg	11	52	f
S Frisco	6	43	s
Santiago	24	75	s
S Paulo	X	X	X
Seoul	-2	28	s
Singapore	30	86	f
Stockholm	-9	16	s
Strasb'rg	1	34	c
Sydney	33	91	s
Tangier	14	57	f
Tel Aviv	18	64	s
Tenerife	16	61	r
Tokyo	9	48	s
Toronto	-12	10	s
Tunis	15	59	s
Valencia	10	50	s
Vanc'ver	8	46	f
Venice	10	50	r
Vienna	1	34	r
Warsaw	-3	27	f
Wash'ton	-1	30	s
Zurich	1	34	c

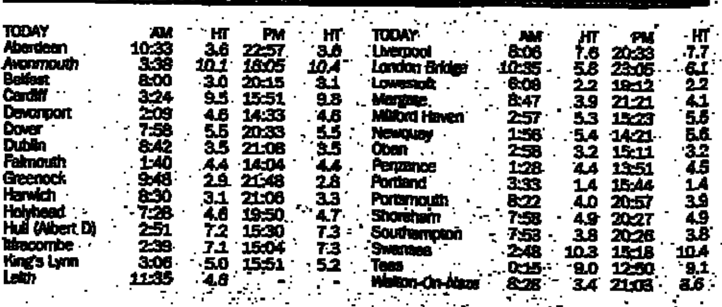
Temperatures at midday local time on Monday X – not available

TODAY



Changes to the chart below from noon: low J will edge slowly southeast and deepen slightly, while low K fills in situ. Meanwhile low L will move northeast with little change in pressure



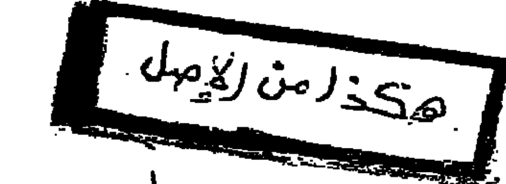


TODAY	AM	HT	PM	HT
Aberdeen	10:33	3.6	22:57	3.6
Avonmouth	3:38	10.1	16:05	10.4
Belfast	8:00	3.0	20:15	3.1
Cardiff	3:24	9.5	15:51	9.8
Devonport	2:09	4.6	14:33	4.6
Dover	7:58	5.5	20:33	5.5
Dublin	8:42	3.5	21:08	3.5
Falmouth	1:40	4.4	14:04	4.4
Greenock	9:48	2.9	21:48	2.8
Harwich	8:30	3.1	21:06	3.3
Holyhead	7:28	4.6	19:50	4.7
Hull (Albert D)	2:51	7.2	15:30	7.3
Ilfracombe	2:39	7.1	15:04	7.3
King's Lynn	3:06	5.0	15:51	5.2
Leith	11:35	4.6	-	-
Liverpool	8:06	7.6	20:33	7.7
London Bridge	10:35	5.8	23:05	6.1
Lowestoft	6:08	2.2	19:12	2.2
Margate	8:47	3.9	21:21	4.1
Milford Haven	2:57	5.3	15:23	5.5
Newquay	1:56	5.4	14:21	5.6
Oban	2:58	3.2	15:11	3.2
Penzance	1:28	4.4	13:51	4.5
Portland	3:33	1.4	15:44	1.4
Portsmouth	8:22	4.0	20:57	3.9
Shoreham	7:58	4.9	20:27	4.9
Southampton	7:53	3.8	20:26	3.8
Swansea	2:48	10.3	15:18	10.4
Tees	0:15	9.0	12:50	9.1
Walton-On-Naze	8:28	3.4	21:03	3.6

All times GMT. Heights in metres.

Yesterday: highest day temp: Torquay (Devon) 11C (52F); lowest day max: Scarborough (North Yorkshire) 1C (34F); highest rainfall: Capel Curig (Gwynedd) 1.31ins; highest sunshine: Edinburgh 5.1hours.

هكذا من الاصل



THE TIMES 2

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 13 1999

Domecq's warning wipes off £850m

BY DOMINIC WALSH

ALLIED DOMECQ, the Beefeater gin and Firkin pubs group, saw more than £850 million wiped from its stock market value yesterday after it issued a stark picture of trading in its pub division.

Its shares, which have performed strongly recently, closed 81½p lower at 516p, cutting its market capitalisation from £6.2 billion to less than £5.4 billion. Earlier in the day, they hit a low of 505p, equivalent to a drop of almost £1 billion.

The setback will increase pressure on the Allied board to find ways to restore shareholder value, after the failure of talks about an alliance with Seagram, its Canadian rival.

Analysts reacted by cutting 1999 profit forecasts by an average of about 3 per cent. They are now expecting pre-tax profits of about £600 million in the year to September compared with £615 million last year.

The culprit was pubs, where like-for-like sales are 2.5 per cent lower in the year to date.

At yesterday's annual meeting, Sir Christopher Hogg, the chairman, told shareholders: "The impact of eroding consumer confidence, first evident last summer, has intensified, particularly over the Christmas period."

Company sources indicated that while food sales in its Big Steak pubs had continued to rise, wet sales across its estate had declined dramatically. "Quite simply, people are not going into our pubs in such great numbers and when they do they're spending less. But it's not just Allied. It's an industry-wide problem.

However, some analysts reacted angrily, with one saying: "This is like the Allied of the bad old days. While some of this is due to market conditions, you have to question how management has responded to the problems."

Another added: "Instead of just saying that first-half profits would be lower and hoping for a hot summer to catch up, they admitted the full year would be down. Things must be bloody awful."

The news overshadowed strong spirits sales in the US and Europe and the £519 million sale last week of Cantrell & Cochrane, the Irish drinks distributor, which is expected to allow Allied to return up to £600 million to shareholders.

The nosedive in Allied's shares — which had rallied from 389½p since October — was all the more stark given the group's remarks on consolidation. Despite recent comments from Seagram, its Canadian rival, that appeared to rule out a spirits merger with Allied, Sir Christopher hinted that a deal could still be possible.

He said: "It remains to be seen how Seagram will address its wine and spirits business in the future. I cannot speculate on any timing, but if there is a possible opportunity we would look at it again."

Allied did not suffer alone yesterday, dragging down other companies in the sector, with Bass diving 74½p to 805p and Whitbread off 10½p to 767½p ahead of today's scheduled trading update.

Shares in Old English Pub Company dropped 48p to 262½p after it said that December's like-for-like sales declined by 2.9 per cent, partly because of the flu epidemic. However, Barry Warwick, chief executive, branded the drop as an over-reaction, adding: "The overall prospects for the future remain very bright".

Commentary, page 25

RON EDMONDS / AP



Blunt words: Charlene Barshefsky said Japan is failing to act responsibly

US facing trade war with Japan and Europe

BY CARL MORTISHED AND ALASDAIR MURRAY

AMERICA faces a trade war on two fronts because of growing tension over steel imports from Japan and the failure yesterday to avert a collision with Europe over bananas.

Charlene Barshefsky, the US trade representative, yesterday gave warning that the US would take legal action if Japan failed to stem the tide of cheap steel entering the US. Ms Barshefsky bluntly accused the Japanese of failing to act responsibly in reviving their economy and said: "It is no secret that trade tensions between the United States and Japan are increasing quite dramatically."

American anger with Japan will be further aggravated by signs that the Bank of Japan was intervening in the currency markets, buying dollars in an effort to stop the rise of the yen. The dollar rose from Y108 to Y112 as the Bank of Japan attempted to prevent a strengthening yen from undermining Japan's efforts to export its way out of recession.

The warning given by Ms Barshefsky to Kaoor Yosano, Japan's Trade Minister, also coincided with a threat of sanctions against Europe. Rita Hayes, the US envoy to the World Trade Organisation, said the US would apply for authorisation to impose sanctions against European imports worth some $568 million (£359 million).

The US will make its request to the WTO on January 27 despite agreement at the trade organisation to set up a dispute resolution panel, requested by Ecuador. The Latin American country was one of the original complainants in the six-year dispute over EU quotas favouring Caribbean bananas.

Under WTO rules, the request for sanctions is unlikely to fail because a refusal must be unanimous and the US takes part in the decision. The US has already published a list of European goods it will target, which include more than £80 million of UK exports, including cashmere sweaters, potentially threatening the struggling Scottish knitwear industry with the loss of some 900 jobs.

WTO experts believe that the US determination in pursuing sanctions over the bananas is an attempt to test Europe's commitment to the WTO rules. One said: "They are trying to prevent the EU from engaging in a continuous loop of litigation."

A US trade spokesman pointed to the outstanding dispute over the European ban on beef hormones. "The deadline for European compliance is on May 13." Failure to comply is likely to lead to more US threats of sanctions.

The steel row could also cause Brussels and Washington to cross swords because each accuses the other of failing to play its part in absorbing a flood of Asian exports. European steelmakers are already launching anti-dumping complaints about Asian producers.

The Bank of Japan would not confirm its intervention yesterday but it would be the first by financial authorities since Japan and the US sold dollars to support the yen last June. The last known dollar-buying intervention by the Bank of Japan was in February 1996.

Commentary, page 25

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	6033.6	(-51.4)
Yield	2.71%	
FTSE All Share	2743.33	(-19.40)
Nikkei	13360.97	(-7.51)
New York:		
Dow Jones	9537.76	(-82.13)*
S&P Composite	1249.81	(-14.07)*

US RATE

Federal Funds	5%*	(5%)
Long bond	100[illegible]*	(99[illegible])
Yield	5.25%*	(5.31%)

LONDON MONEY

3-mth interbank	5[illegible]%	(5[illegible]%)
Liffe long gilt future (Mar)	118.73	(119.24)

STERLING

New York:		
$	1.6307*	(1.6295)
London:		
$	1.6305	(1.6401)
€	1.4126	(1.4220)
SFr	2.2679	(2.2922)
Yen	182.29	(179.30)
£ Index	98.6	(99.0)

DOLLAR

London:		
€	1.1551*	(1.1502)
SFr	1.3895*	(1.4005)
Yen	112.08*	(108.62)
$ index	103.8	(103.0)

Tokyo close Yen 112.40

NORTH SEA OIL

Brent 15-day (Mar)	$11.60	($11.95)

GOLD

London close	$288.75	($292.70)

Exchange rates .... Page 24

* denotes midday trading prices

Wembley signs stadium deal

WEMBLEY has signed the £103 million deal to sell its famous stadium to a subsidiary of the Football Association, so ending nearly nine months of speculation about its future (Jason Nissé writes).

The FA will now set about trying to raise £200 million to fund the redevelopment of the stadium. The sale was agreed in April, but it has been held up because three non-executive directors objected. They approached Enic, the investment company, which said it is prepared to make a £230 million bid for Wembley.

Classic contest, page 27

Revenue approves 300 firms to sell Isa

BY CAROLINE MERRELL

MORE than 300 companies have been cleared to offer the individual savings account (Isa), despite the financial services industry's initial misgivings about the viability of the scheme.

The Inland Revenue revealed yesterday that 300 companies had received authorisation to offer Isas, the Government's replacement for personal equity plans (Peps) and tax-exempt special savings accounts (Tessas).

The high level of companies gaining authorisation follows more than a year of controversy about the accounts, which were unveiled at the end of 1997 by Geoffrey Robinson, the former Paymaster General. Companies claimed that the rules, and in particular a government-designed benchmark — the Cat standard — made the Isa economically unviable.

Patricia Hewitt, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said: "This is good news. It means that savers will be able to choose from a very wide range of Isa providers and products when the Isa is launched on April 6."

Marks & Spencer, J Sainsbury and Tesco were among those most critical of the Government's schemes. All three are now gearing up for the launch. M&S said yesterday that it was planning a big advertising campaign for its Isa. However, the supermarkets will not be offering the Isa at the checkouts as originally envisaged by the Government.

Cooklin leaves Signet to take helm at Thorn

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM, RETAIL CORRESPONDENT

LAURENCE COOKLIN, the man who took over the running of Burton Group after the departure of Sir Ralph Halpern, is leaving Signet, where he has been in charge of the Ernest Jones and H Samuel businesses for the past six years, to take the helm at Thorn.

Thorn, which owns the Radio Rentals business, was bought by Nomura last year after a dismal period as an independent company after its demerger from EMI.

James McAdam, chairman of Signet, will take day-to-day control of the group's British businesses while the company looks for a replacement UK chief executive. Signet, which is also listed on Nasdaq, now has most of its operations in the US and said that a strong performance there should mean that pre-tax profits for the year to January 30 will be ahead of expectations.

The group said yesterday that like-for-like sales at Ernest Jones were up 1.1 per cent in the three weeks to Christmas Eve. At H Samuel they fell 2.4 per cent. In the US, where it trades as Jared and Sterling, like-for-like sales rose 10.6 per cent in the same period. Signet shares rose 3¼p to 39½p.

Cooklin: on the move

AXA puts in offer for GRE

BY MARIANNE CURPHEY
INSURANCE CORRESPONDENT

GUARDIAN Royal Exchange (GRE), the embattled composite insurer, has received an informal approach from AXA, the French insurer, valuing the company at about 360p a share.

AXA, which owns Sun Life in the UK, has not tabled the offer formally. The board of GRE, led by John Robins, chief executive, is understood to have asked AXA to raise the offer. GRE is seeking closer to 500p a share.

Shares in GRE, which has a market capitalisation of almost £3 billion, closed 1p higher at 337p yesterday after four million shares changed hands. The insurer said last month it was considering a number of options for its future.

It has also emerged that Peter Owen, chief executive of PPP, has been appointed heir apparent to Mr Robins, who is not expected to continue at GRE in the long term.

GRE declined to comment on whether the company had received a bid.

A Christmas cracker for Kingfisher

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM

KINGFISHER, the retail group, yesterday declared the high street to have been the winner at Christmas. Its high street chains, Woolworths and Superdrug, outperformed Comet and B&Q, which are mainly in out-of-town retail parks.

In the nine weeks to January 2, group like-for-like sales grew by 3.2 per cent. Woolworths and Superdrug, which are heavily dependent on Christmas sales, had like-for-like growth of 5.2 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively.

B&Q, the DIY business, and Comet, the electricals superstore chain, fared less well. B&Q saw like-for-like sales rise 0.6 per cent, while Comet sales were down 0.9 per cent. Darty, the French electricals business, had like-for-like sales growth of 2 per cent.

Total sales for the group, which has just completed the merger of B&Q with its French equivalent, Castorama, were £1.98 billion, a 23 per cent rise from £1.61 billion. This was after growth from acquisitions and new stores as well as like-for-like growth.

Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy, chief executive, said: "Customers were careful with their money in the run-up to Christmas, but overall we are pleased with the group's performance, which leaves us well placed to meet our targets for the year."

Matalan, another retailer emphasising value for money, yesterday reported strong Christmas trading. In the five weeks to January 2, like-for-like sales rose by 11.4 per cent. Matalan said that annual pre-tax profits, to be announced in March, will be not less than £23 million, which is well above current City forecasts.

Kingfisher's shares fell 25p to 624½p yesterday. Matalan's rose 17p to 369½p.

Tempus, page 26

Incorrect tax bills sent to 800,000

BY ANNE ASHWORTH

THE Inland Revenue has sent out incorrect income tax bills to 800,000 self-employed people.

The errors on self-assessment statements of account led the unfortunate recipients to believe that they had to pay twice as much as they had been expecting.

Accountants have been inundated with calls from anxious clients fearing that they might not be able to meet these liabilities. The self-assessment payment deadline is January 31.

Chris Humphrey, a tax consultant from Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, called the blunder a "scandal". One of his clients who had anticipated a bill of about £1,200 had received a statement giving a figure of £2,400.

Many of the self-employed are already reeling from the change to the payment system under self-assessment. For the first time they are being taxed on current year earnings, rather than the previous year's as under the old system. On January 31, thousands will be paying not only the remaining tax for 1997-98 but also the first instalment of tax owing for 1998-99.

Admitting its mistake yesterday, the Revenue explained that the wrong figures appeared on statements sent to those self-employed who were due to make payments on account for the 1998-99 tax year. These payments are due on January 31 and July 31. "The second payment has inadvertently been included and is shown without a date."

The Revenue promised that it would be writing to taxpayers and their advisers to clarify the situation. Anyone still unable to calculate what amount to pay should contact their local tax office or the self-assessment helpline (0645 000444).

Vickers and Giat in talks

Vickers, the engineering group, has confirmed it is in talks with Giat Industries, a French defence group, aimed at forming a joint venture company for supplying land defence equipment. The memorandum of intent signed yesterday between the two companies is a further step in the consolidation of the European land defence industry.

The alliance will initially cover functions such as sales and research, and will not include pooling manufacturing facilities.

The joint venture would not cover Vickers's Challenger 2 tank and Giat's Leclerc tank, which are in direct competition.

Amec trading holds up

Amec, the engineering and construction group, yesterday sought to reassure the City that its trading was holding up and order books were steady. It told the market that trading was in line with expectations — despite "general uncertainties" in the UK economy — ahead of the publication of its results on March 11.

Peter Mason, chief executive, told analysts that prospects had been brightened by its £80 million contract for a section of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, its preferred bidder status for the £70 million West Anglia and North Thames rail infrastructure maintenance contract and a £75 million order for Southern Water.

Cortecs closure

Cortecs, the troubled drug development company, is making 75 staff redundant and closing its Isleworth, west London, head office. Shares in Cortecs rose 40 per cent to 26p yesterday. More than 9.2 million shares were traded, reflecting interest sparked by Nomura International's acquisition of a stake of more than 6 per cent.

EXCHANGE RATES

	Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia $	2.65	2.47
Austria Sch	20.50	18.84
Belgium Fr	60.34	55.38
Canada $	2.583	2.395
Cyprus Cyp £	0.8665	0.7950
Denmark Kr	11.13	10.24
Egypt	5.76	5.15
Finland Mkk	8.97	8.22
France Fr	9.76	8.98
Germany Dm	2.934	2.692
Greece Dr	485	446
Hong Kong $	13.47	12.27
Iceland	126	106
Indonesia	16835	11335
Ireland Pt	1.1703	1.0813
Israel Shk	6.98	6.32
Italy Lira	2917	2680
Japan Yen	198.16	180.63
Malta	0.658	0.599
Netherlds Gld	3.313	3.018
New Zealand $	3.14	2.90
Norway Kr	12.80	11.86
Portugal Esc	296.61	274.58
S Africa Rd	10.47	9.51
Spain Pta	247.22	228.44
Sweden Kr	13.70	12.60
Switzerland Fr	2.429	2.211
Turkey Lira	542542	506481
USA $	1.738	1.595

Rates for small denomination banknotes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

Manufacturing woes raise hopes of European rate cut

By Alasdair Murray and Adam Sage

GERMANY suffered an unexpectedly sharp contraction in industrial output in November while French inflation slipped to a 44-year low last year, raising hopes of an early cut in European interest rates.

The weak manufacturing outlook was further backed up by a separate report showing manufacturing activity across the euro zone declining for the third consecutive month in December.

However, European consumer confidence rose to a ten-year high, providing one bright spot amid a string of otherwise gloomy data.

Germany, Europe's largest economy, recorded a 2.3 per cent fall in industrial output, about three times more than the market expected. The manufacturing element of the data showed an even sharper fall, registering a decline of 2.4 per cent. Economists said the figures were so weak that the German economy as a whole is likely to show a contraction across the fourth quarter.

The separate euro zone purchasing managers index stood at 46.9 in December, down from 47.2 in November and pointing to a further decline in activity. Inflation pressures remained almost non-existent, with the cost of raw materials and semi-manufactured goods again slipping.

Dr Frank Schröder, German economist at HSBC Trinkaus, said: "Given the weakening industrial picture throughout euroland, we expect the European Central Bank to cut the repo rate by a quarter point in February."

Analysts also turned up the pressure on the ECB for an interest rate cut by pointing to evidence that other measures of inflation remain subdued across Europe.

Consumer inflation in France, with prices rising at an annual rate of just 0.3 per cent, sparked fears of a deflationary spiral in the heart of the euro zone.

The French Government yesterday announced the virtual price stability in triumphant tones, pointing out that with growth of 3.1 per cent last year, the spending power of French households had improved considerably.

Statisticians said the last time France had an inflation lower than last year's was in 1953, when prices slumped by 2.3 per cent, provoking a period of social and political instability.

Deflation at the wholesale level also gathered pace in Spain, with prices falling 2.1 per cent in the year to November after a 1.8 per cent decline the month before.

However, Eurostat, the European Commission's statistical office, said euro zone consumer confidence rose to its highest level since early 1990. Consumers are showing a positive attitude towards large purchases and a more optimistic approach to the general economic situation.

Morgan tops UK mergers league table

By Richard Miles, banking correspondent

MORGAN Stanley Dean Witter has become the first American investment bank to top the UK mergers and acquisitions table after advising on deals worth more than £19 billion in 1998.

Schroders came a close second with 28 transactions valued at £18.3 billion, while Lazards, last year's winner, slipped to fourth behind Goldman Sachs, the Wall Street partnership that shelved its own flotation last autumn.

David Rothnie, editor of Acquisitions Monthly, the magazine that compiles the league tables, said it had been a record year for M&A activity. The total value of UK public deals hit £90 billion, smashing the previous record of £67.7 billion in 1995.

He said: "The most remarkable aspect of 1998 was the sheer volume of activity, coming as it did in a year of economic turbulence, with banks adopting a cautious approach to funding buyouts and IPOs during the third quarter. Nevertheless, a strong final quarter meant UK M&A activity broke all records."

The ascendancy of Morgan Stanley, said Mr Rothnie, demonstrated that some US banks now have an established reputation for providing quality advice on UK public transactions. During the year, the bank worked on two multibillion-pound deals for The Energy Group, as well as GA's merger with Commercial Union.

Schroders topped the league by number of transactions, which included the pitched battle between Argos and Great Universal Stores, and the acquisition of Allied Colloids by white knight Ciba Speciality Chemcials. Other deals included the GA/CU merger and Nomura's purchase of Thorn.

Most improved bank was Credit Suisse First Boston, a new entry at number six, after its £100 million acquisition of BZW's equities and corporate advisory businesses at the end of 1997. Barings, winner in both 1996 and 1995, continues to slide down the league table, slipping two positions to fifteenth.

Ellis & Everard, the chemicals distributor, where Peter Wood, above, is chief executive, saw pre-tax profits in the half year to October 31 improve 3 per cent to £17 million. The interim dividend rises 3 per cent to 3.6p a share. Tempus, page 26

Trinity and Mirror proposal deadlocked

By Raymond Snoddy, media editor

FINANCIAL advisers were yesterday unable to break the deadlock in merger talks between Mirror Group and Trinity, the UK's largest regional newspaper company.

Trinity, whose titles include the Daily Post in Liverpool and the Belfast Telegraph, withdrew on Sunday and said that it has no intention of making the first move. The Mirror board also said that it does not intend to approach Trinity. It is believed that there were no contacts between the two groups yesterday, formal or otherwise.

Senior Mirror executives met yesterday with Philips & Drew Fund Management (PDFM), which holds a 22 per cent stake in the company.

PDFM, which is enthusiastic about the strategic potential of a Trinity-Mirror merger, wanted to hold a "post mortem" and inquire whether a deal was still possible. But for the moment at least the chances seem less likely. Mirror shares rose 3p to 169p. Trinity rose 10½p to 439p.

Any deal would trigger a Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation which could last up to eight months.

Bullough aims to make acquisitions

BULLOUGH, the engineering, heating and office furniture company, plans to make several acquisitions to strengthen its specialist engineering businesses in the face of "worsening market conditions". The company, which last year sold three of its refrigeration businesses for £16 million, said that it would also use the cash raised from its disposal programme to increase organic investment and to repurchase shares.

The company was reporting a rise in profits from its continuing operations in the year to October 31 to £19.4 million, from £19.1 million, on turnover up 11 per cent to £203 million (£184 million). Pre-tax profits before exceptionals fell to £18.3 million (£19.0 million). An unchanged 4.51p final dividend keeps the total at 5.8p. Gordon Bond, chief executive, said: "The current year will be a difficult one if current economic conditions are anything to go by, and we are responding accordingly. We are simply playing to our strengths."

Savills raises earnings

SAVILLS, the property agency, reported a 28 per cent rise in half-year pre-tax earnings to £5.2 million. Although the results were in line with expectations, the company's shares slipped 6p to 117p. A collapse in the share price in the summer is believed to have prompted First Pacific Davies, a shareholder, to line up a takeover bid. FDP, however, cannot acquire more of the stock until April because of a standstill clause in a partnership agreement. The interim dividend rises 40 per cent to 1.75p. Tempus, page 26

Rentokil spends £37m

RENTOKIL INITIAL, the business services company, yesterday announced eight acquisitions for a total of £37 million. The purchases include two textile services businesses, Adrett in Germany and BTMF in France, and the Initial Staffing franchisee in Cincinnati in the US. Five security businesses have also been acquired: Crime Halt Security Systems, Wolsey Comcare Alarm Systems and Capstan, all in the UK, Alert Security Systems in The Netherlands, and Minion Manned Guarding in Alberta, Canada.

WYKO warning

WYKO, the engineering group, reported increased profits yesterday but gave warning that "demand has become more erractic". The group lifted pre-tax profits to £6.2 million for the half year to October 31, from £5.9 million last time. Philip White, chairman, said: "If the pre-Christmas level of demand does continue into the new year, profits in the second half will be adversely affected and are then unlikely to match the first half performance." Earnings per share were 6.41p (6.1p) and an interim dividend of 1.8p (1.65p) was declared.

Dudley Jenkins rises

SHARES in Dudley Jenkins, the direct mail supplies group, rose nearly 14 per cent after the company announced it was at an "advanced stage" of takeover talks. The company said that any offer would be at 580p per share, a premium of 18 per cent to Monday's closing price of 492½p. In July, the group reported full-year pre-tax profits of £3.63 million (£2.65 million) on turnover of £23.13 million. Tylan Bahcheli, chairman, views 1999 with "cautious optimism". The shares, which have risen from a low of 312p in October, yesterday closed up 67½p at 560p.

Bespak shares fall

SHARES of Bespak fell 68½p to 917½p yesterday after the medical devices manufacturer said that the decline in sales of valves for its CFC inhalers would be "greater than originally anticipated" and would offset growth in other areas. Inhaler valves provide about 45 per cent of group sales worldwide. The warning came as Bespak announced record first-half profits of £7 million for the six months to October 30, up from £6.6 million, on sales of £41.9 million (£42.3 million). Earnings per share were 20.3p (18.9p) and the interim dividend is 5.6p (5.1p).

Aggregate optimism

AGGREGATE INDUSTRIES, the quarrying group that recently pulled out of a £1.8 billion merger with Tarmac, the construction group, yesterday said trading had been rock-solid to the end of last year. In a trading update, AI said that it had produced savings of £13 million a year since its formation as a result of a merger between Bardon and Camas in 1997. Most of the improved results came from the US, with strong demand reported in all markets. Favourable weather in the US extended AI's working season. AI shares remained at 69p.

First Leisure in talks

By Dominic Walsh

FIRST LEISURE yesterday admitted that it was discussing "a number of strategic alternatives" with third parties, sparking a fresh round of takeover speculation in the leisure sector.

There have been suggestions that Luminar, the nightclub and theme bar operator, or even Rank Group might be eyeing First Leisure. However, analysts were last night strongly tipping Luminar to make a move on Northern Leisure, the rival nightclub group.

First Leisure, which was forced to make a statement by the Takeover Panel after a sharp rise in its share price on Monday, said its talks were "at a very exploratory stage", adding: "It is therefore too soon to predict whether they will result in any agreement at all."

Observers believe Michael Grade, chief executive, is seeking a deal in a bid to revive the group's ailing share price. Over the summer it slumped from 436½p to 160½p. Its rise this week to 224p is largely based on hopes of a bid.

But observers believe the tone of yesterday's statement indicates that a takeover of, or by, First Leisure is unlikely. One said: "What you might see is some sort of strategic alliance or joint venture with the likes of Vardon on the health and fitness side."

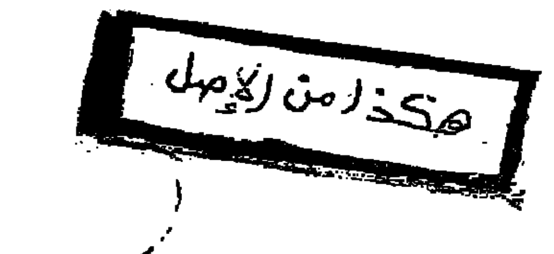
Gold price tarnished

By Carl Mortished, international business editor

THE gold market is heading for a year of stagnation after suffering the lowest average annual price in two decades. A combination of weak demand, sales from central banks and falling costs of production has persuaded Gold Field Mineral Services (GSMS), the commodity researchers, that the gold price will remain stuck in a range of between $270 and $310 per ounce.

GFMS said yesterday that the average gold price for 1998 was $294 per ounce, the lowest for 20 years. Paul Walker, spokesman for GFMS, said that gold was becoming commoditised and losing its status as a hedge against inflation, as investors sought greater security in dollars and US government bonds. According to GFMS, currency weakness resulted in 1,000 tonnes of gold flowing into the market from Indonesia, Korea and Thailand, as people turned their jewellery into cash.

The average cash cost worldwide of producing an ounce of gold fell by $50 to less than $200 from the third quarter in 1997 to that of 1998. "It's a phenomenal fall; most mines will continue producing as long as they can cover their operating costs," Mr Walker said.



An Enterprise worth exploring



COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

If there is any rival out there who believes that BTR and Siebe should not be joined together, he is keeping his peace until the very last moment. Despite investor hopes that more generous souls than Lord Marshall and Allan Yurko might decide to ride to Ian Strachan's rescue, the weeks have ticked by without a sign of a *company prepared to* put a higher value on BTR than Mr Strachan himself has done. So today shareholders will almost certainly vote through the deal, although in a spirit more of resignation than enthusiasm.

Yet the challenge that those two companies faced in marketing their proposed marriage are as nothing compared with the problems that lie ahead for Lasmo and Enterprise Oil. If news of their flirting has met with a sceptical response, it is hardly surprising, since their previous encounter was in a bid which fully lived up to its designation as "hostile".

Times, and the oil price, change and so, force majeure, do relationships. But the two companies might have had a better chance of convincing the market of the merits of a get-together had the idea not leaked extremely prematurely. The ensuing speculation as to who would constitute the top team in the combined operation was hardly guaranteed to foster a new spirit of friendliness between the organisations.

Yet the potential value in putting the two companies together does merit giving them the chance to explore the idea in some depth. They could prove to be *surprisingly compatible*.

Both companies are already embarked on cost-cutting exercises, necessarily more drastic at Lasmo *than* at Enterprise, so there will be only limited scope to *cut still further after a merger*. A decision to exit completely, rather than merely scale back, Enterprise's presence in lavish Trafalgar Square offices might, however, be judged a sensitive move.

There could be more positive aspects, however, to rolling the two exploration and production companies into one. With Lasmo facing some hefty write-offs, blamed on investments made before the sensible Joe Darby took over the reins, there are fears that the company could be forced into selling some assets into a desperately mean marketplace. As part of a financially stronger enterprise, painful forced sales could be avoided. And together the companies might find they could offer investors a portfolio with a more reassuring balance of geographic and financial risks and future profit prospects than either can alone.

If those arguments do prove convincing to the companies themselves, they will face the tricky question of who will run the show. More immediately appealing link-ups have foundered on a few people's job prospects. The suave Rudolph Agnew is big enough to happily move onto the next challenge, allowing Sir Graham Hearne to chair the pairing. But neither Pierre Jungels nor Joe Darby deserve to be cast in the Ian Strachan role.

Charlene may yet drive us bananas

How deeply is the United States committed to free trade? Absolutely, every blue-blooded American would say. Let's hope so. The open trading system depends on that American commitment, in the face of age-old protectionist tendencies in continental Europe.

Over the next two years, however, that commitment will face a severe test. It will certainly be the toughest since the high-dollar era of the mid1980s, possibly the most stressful since the postwar Bretton Woods accord.

The only reason the world economy has not followed Japan, Russia and the Asian "tigers" into recession is that American consumers are holding it up. They are still spending like there is a tomorrow that they can rely on.

Asia is not importing much. Countries tend not to if, as in Indonesia, your currency retains only a quarter of its exchange value of 18 months ago or if, as in Japan, your economy has scarcely grown in a decade. Even Brazil is undergoing a medicinal squeeze. No wonder the German capital goods industry is in trouble.

Not surprisingly, the US trade deficit is growing by leaps and bounds. It has to if the rest of the world economy is to recover before the US tires of the burden. Its trade gap will reach ever higher records as Asia relies on export-led growth to get its economies moving again. The US and the *European Union* may have instructed the rest to rely on internal recovery, but no one ever thought they could.

American industry will still complain ever more bitterly as it sees exports dry up and imports eat into existing markets as well as feeding increases in US domestic demand and those complaints will carry weight with a weakened President. Next year, looking after American industry will be the stuff of campaigns to elect a new President.

How depressing, then, that the US should be stepping the rhetoric up to fever pitch already. In Tokyo yesterday, US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky threatened Japan with "punitive sanctions" unless it took action over steel exports and much else. In Geneva, US trade ambassador Rita Hayes said the US would go ahead with sanctions forcing 100 per cent tariffs on $500 million of imports from the EU in the endless banana dispute, where US policy is guided by the *former* United Fruit.

This courtroom hype is for domestic ears. It is also the sort of diplomacy that ends in war. Right now, a trade war is not what the world economy needs.

Two halves please, barman

Can it be that they do not go near such places themselves? Analysts appear to have been more than a little surprised to hear of the dismal sales performance at Allied Domecq pubs, hence they had not seen yesterday's profits warning coming. Yet back in October, Allied was sounding anything but optimistic about the prospects for the business, cutting back investment plans and warning of the effects of increased competition. What has been happening in the real economy, rather than the stock market, since then may have encouraged the man in the street to drown his sorrows, but he may have opted to do so more cheaply at home than in his local.

Allied increasingly looks like a business of two halves, one potentially swift and one a laggard. Seeing approaching £1 billion wiped off their investment can only encourage investors to push harder for the demerger that they have long been hoping Sir Christopher Hogg would instigate. He has recently seemed to be warming to the idea.

Allied's international drinks business has performed remarkably well, considering the state of world markets. That the long discussed possibility of a close link with Seagram has been publicly shelved by the Canadians is *not* the disaster that it might have seemed a couple of years ago. Allied also has a stable of strong retail brands. The pub trade still has its afficionados. Allied should ask them in for a friendly drink immediately.

Style and substance

MONSIEUR Bernard Arnault's approach to the business game combines the tactics of a chess player with the occasional tantrums of the tennis court. His former boardroom colleagues at Guinness speak fondly of his contribution to Anglo-French relations, which at one stage threatened to block the merger with Grand Metropolitan to create Diageo. Even they would have to admire the way in which he is now tying both Gucci and Prada more tightly into his DFS shopping empire: a truly stylish deal.

JJB issues profits warning

JJB SPORTS, the sports retailer, yesterday issued a profits warning after disastrous Christmas trading by Sports Division, the business it bought last year (Sarah Cunningham writes).

JJB, whose shares fell 13 per cent to 249p in response, is calling a shareholders' meeting next month to seek consent to buy back its shares. It will buy up to 5 per cent this year if the price stays low.

In the seven weeks to January 9, Sports Division's like-for-like sales, stripping out new stores, fell 16 per cent. For the 49 weeks to that date, they fell 11 per cent. Stores trading as JJB fared far better, managing a like-for-like sales increase of 7.4 per cent over the Christmas weeks, and a 0.3 per cent increase over the 49 weeks.

Arjo gets set for three-way split

By Carl Mortished, International Business Editor

ARJO Wiggins Appleton, the Anglo-French paper business, has effectively put a "for sale" sign on itself and removed its chief executive after announcing plans to repackage its sprawling empire into three independent divisions.

Ken Minton, Arjo's chairman, said that Philippe Beylier would leave the group because a chief executive would not be needed under the new structure.

Mr Minton, who is taking on the role of executive chairman, said that Arjo would be left with three distinct businesses with little synergy between them: carbonless and thermal paper; fine, speciality and coated paper; and paper merchanting.

Mr Minton said that the plan was to develop the businesses separately to enhance shareholder value. He said: "I have no doubt that the sum of the parts can be demonstrated to be substantially greater than the whole."

He said that a sale, a demerger or a flotation were likely options, but he doubted that any of the businesses would be suitable for a management buyout. "We will look at the various options when it is right to do so," he said.

Shares in the paper group rose from 109½ to 115p after news of the possible break-up. Mr Minton insisted that the result for 1998 would be in line with expectations and that there were no plans for large restructuring charges. He said: "There is no black hole. This is not advance notice of a cold-bath situation."

M Beylier will receive compensation of about £830,000 based on a two-year service contract.

Arjo has been a disastrous investment for its shareholders, having almost halved in value since the merger that formed the group in 1991, when it was worth £2 billion. Mr Minton confirmed that at least £1.5 billion had been invested in the business since then, but, even after yesterday's share price boost, the company had a market value of just under £1 billion.

Arjo has previously tried to shed its carbonless paper operation. One analyst said: "In this business, it may be difficult to turn off all the lights and go home."

Tempus, page 26

Sears to sell credit card firm

SEARS will today attempt to spike the guns of Philip Green, the entrepreneur laying siege to the troubled retailer, by announcing the sale of its credit card business (Sarah Cunningham writes).

The sale of Creation Financial Services — the announcement of which will accompany what is expected to be a poor Christmas trading statement — is expected to be for more than £120 million.

Analysts believe that Freemans, its catalogue business, has been trading particularly poorly.

Mr Green, who is believed to have lined up buyers for Creation and Freemans, will decide on his next move after seeing the Sears trading statement. His last conditional offer for Sears — before Christmas — was of 340p a share, but was rejected. Sears shares closed down 3½p at 285½p.

Arnault raises Gucci stake in deal with Prada

By Fraser Nelson

BERNARD ARNAULT, chairman of LVMH, has agreed a secret deal with Prada whereby his company will acquire the Italian fashion house's 9.5 per cent stake in Gucci (See Commentary, this page).

Prada has agreed to sell for an undisclosed amount believed to be about £200 million — 20 per cent below market value. This gives LVMH a 14.4 per cent stake in Gucci.

In return M Arnault will sell Prada clothes through DFS, its Far East network of shopping arcades, on similar terms to those of LVMH's own labels, which include Christian Dior and Kenzo.

The deal leaves LVMH with greater control over both its Italian rivals, becoming one of Prada's largest distributors and Gucci's largest shareholder.

M Arnault now has ten days to decide whether to make a formal bid for Gucci. However, shares of both companies fell yesterday on the expectation that M Arnault will now lie low and enjoy the new flow of internal Gucci trading information.

Analysts believe that M Arnault sees Gucci and Prada as the salvation of DFS, a network of Far Eastern airport fashion arcades that he bought just before the economic crisis two years ago. M Arnault believes the economy is about to rebound, and that DFS commands most of the sites where Gucci and Prada would wish to expand.

LVMH generates 40 per cent of its sales from the Far East. Gucci generates 38 per cent and Prada about 35 per cent. Gucci is now valued at £2.6 billion.

Boost for HMV Media

HMV MEDIA, owner of Waterstone's bookshops and HMV music shops, looks to be heading for an early flotation (Sarah Cunningham writes).

The group, whose chairman is Tim Waterstone, envisaged a float within 18 to 36 months when it was formed in March 1998. Alan Giles, HMV chief executive, who ran Waterstone's when WH Smith owned it, said that a "heartening Christmas performance" had aided flotation prospects. He would not rule out a float before autumn. Comparable store sales rose 4.9 per cent over Christmas.

In the company's second quarter, to October 24, operating profit rose £10.5 million to £14.6 million. Finance charges of £33 million led to a first-half loss of £16.1 million.

STOCK MARKET MICHAEL CLARK

Blue chip shares fall as investors return to basics

SOME of the speculative froth was blown off share values as City investors switched their focus of attention back to fundamentals. The profits warning from drinks giant Allied Domecq, down 81½p at 516p, has left a nasty taste in their mouths and cast doubts on the ability of blue chip stocks to achieve the same rate of returns as in the past.

This, combined with opening losses on Wall Street, saw London reverse its early gains. The FTSE 100 index, up 55.3 points at one stage, eventually closed down 51.4 at 6,033.6. Turnover topped more than 1.2 billion shares, while the FTSE 250 index ended just 4.9 down at 4,977.1.

Heavy turnover was recorded in BP Amoco, up 17½p at 906½p (33 million shares); Billiton, up 3½p at 122p (27.9 million); Shell, ¾p easier at 349p (24.8 million); and BTR, ½p cheaper at 116½p (17.49 million).

Positive comments from Deutsche Morgan Grenfell lifted Tesco 9½p to 185½p (32.4 million shares). The broker has moved from "neutral" to "outperform" and claims the shares remain the most attractive play in the food retail sector.

The comments from DMG about Tesco come hard on the heels of a positive report from Crédit Lyonnais, the broker, which has gone "overweight". Asda firmed 1p to 161p, J Sainsbury 3¼p to 468¾p and William Morrison Supermarkets 7p to 314½p.

Royal & SunAlliance retreated 15p to 522p after Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, the broker, cut its recommendation from "add" to "hold". There was heavy turnover in GRE, ½p better at 337p, amid claims that the group had agreed terms with Axa, the French insurer.

It took long enough, but Michael Grade and the board of First Leisure have confirmed they are in talks about a number of "strategic initiatives". Why else would the shares have climbed steadily since October, from a low of 160½? A management buyout is now considered unlikely.

The speculators are pinning their hopes on a bid from the likes of either Bass, down 74½p at 805p, or Rank Group. Talks of a merger with Luminar, 5p off at 675p, persist, although the night club operator is also being linked with Northern Leisure, 2½p cheaper at 112p. First Leisure slipped 8p to 224p, while Rank fell 10½p to 209¼p amid fears that Douglas Yates, the acting chief executive, is to be appointed full-time. The City had been hoping for a strong external candidate.

Dan Wagner's Dialog Corporation climbed 15½p to 73½p, reflecting fresh demand for Internet suppliers in the US, where there has been a strong rerating of the sector.


Luke Johnson has a 7 per cent stake in United Carriers and could be putting the finishing touches to a reverse takeover

Things appear to be warming up nicely at United Carriers, up 6½p at 33½p, the latest vehicle for the former stockbroker and pizza king Luke Johnson. He has built up a 7 per cent stake and may be putting the finishing touches to a reverse takeover. He has established a reputation as a dealmaker.

Shield Diagnostics' loyal fan club was again giving chase, with the price closing 42½p dearer at 537½p. Word is the company, which has developed a process for detecting heart ailments via a simple blood test, may be about to make a bullish announcement.

Airtech raced up 8p to 35½p after a mention in this column yesterday. The company says it is in talks with several parties, which could lead to a merger. Filtronic, down 6p at 641½p, is a possible suitor.

Is Albright & Wilson going be the next company to come under the hammer in the chemicals sector? The price firmed 4p to 68½p in heavy turnover of 7.34 million shares. The company is worth more than £200 million.

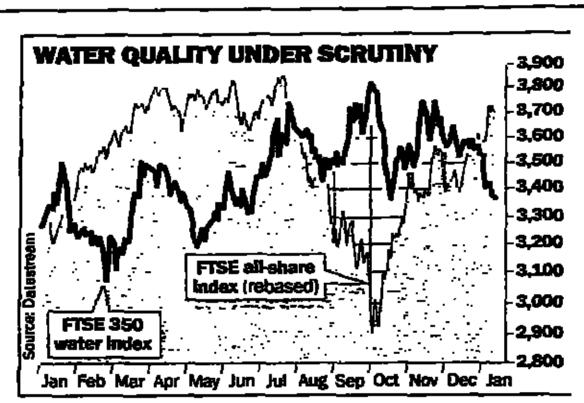
There seems to be no stopping Cortecs, where bid hopes drove the price a further 7¼p, or 38 per cent, higher to 26p. Nomura, the Japanese securities house, snapped up three million shares last week and now holds about 10 per cent.

On-Line continues to go from strength to strength, with the price soaring 16p to 45½p. The company knows of no reason for the rise. But Michael Hodges, chairman and managing director, has sold 50,000 shares at 30p. Clem Chambers, a director, has also unloaded a further 100,000 shares at prices ranging from 30p to 33p. They say the disposals were made to improve liquidity. On Monday another director, David Crump, bought 2,500 shares at 25p.

Environmental Property Services, the building services support specialist, held steady at 8¾p. Teather & Greenwood, the broker, says the shares are a "buy".

GILT-EDGED: Falls stretched to more than £1 at the longer end as investors began switching out of the London bond market and into Europe. In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt fell 51p to £118.73 as the number of contracts completed stretched to 30,000. Among conventional issues, Treasury 8 per cent fell £1.46 to £149.15, while in shorts, Treasury 7 per cent 2002 shed 19p at £107.72.

NEW YORK: Wall Street shares were lower at midday, with the Dow Jones industrial average off 82.13 points at 9,537.76, just above its session low. However, strength in Walt Disney and Eastman Kodak helped the Dow to outperform the S&P 500 index.



THE water companies are now facing up to close scrutiny from Ofwat, the industry regulator, over their pricing policies.

Some investors say that the sector has lost the sparkle that it enjoyed a few years back, when takeovers and lucrative dividends were common.

However, Crédit Lyonnais, the broker, has been telling clients that value for money may still be found.

Among the quality plays being tipped by CL are Anglian Water, down 12p at 795p, and United Utilities, 2p easier at 790p.

The broker still expects companies such as Anglian and UU to be in the bedrock of most portfolios and is confident of solid dividend growth despite the attention of Ofwat.

Elsewhere in the sector yesterday, Hyder rose 11½p to 792½p and Severn Trent firmed 6p to 948p, while Pennon Group eased 3½p to £11.22½, Thames Water retreated 19p to £10.63 and Yorkshire Water shed 8½p to 521½p.

New York (midday):	
Dow Jones	9537.76 (−82.13)
S&P Composite	1249.81 (−14.07)
Tokyo:	
Nikkei Average	13380.97 (−7.51)
Hong Kong:	
Hang Seng	10771.56 (+77.29)
Amsterdam:	
AEX Index	536.24 (−9.53)
Sydney:	
AO	2846.3 (−3.1)
Frankfurt:	
DAX	5200.10 (−70.50)
Singapore:	
Straits	1536.98 (−6.10)
Brussels:	
BEL20	3486.83 (−43.47)
Paris:	
CAC-40	4100.70 (−101.20)
Zurich:	
SKA Gen	1492.90 (−11.50)
London:	
FT 30	3601.9 (−39.3)
FTSE 100	6033.6 (−51.4)
FTSE 250	4977.1 (−4.9)
FTSE 350	2843.3 (−21.0)
FTSE Eurotop 100	2823.00 (−39.92)
FTSE All-Share	2743.33 (−19.40)
FTSE Non Financials	2795.33 (−22.98)
FTSE Fixed Interest	156.45 (−0.97)
FTSE Govt Secs	115.17 (−0.81)
Bargains	77273
SEAQ Volume	1209.8m
US$	1.6307 (−0.0093)
Euro	0.7078 (+0.0044)
Exchange Index	96.6 (−0.4)
Bank of England official close (4pm)	
£:SDR	1.1715
RPI	164.4 Nov (3.0%) Jan 1987 = 100
RPIX	162.0 Nov (2.5%) Jan 1987 = 100

AIM VCT	100		...
Abbey Natl Dublin Inv	92½		...
BFS O'seas Inc & Gwth Cap	99		...
BFS O'seas Inc & Gwth Inc	121½		...
Chariot	117½		...
Collective Assets Trust	117		...
Financial Objects	276	−	1
First Active	345½	−	3
Five Arrs Uts Cv Ln 2040	119¼	−	¾
Marley B	11		...
Natl Bldg Mtls Cv Pl	105		...
Natural Building Mtls	5		...
Piccadilly Growth Ts	97		...
REXAM B (100)	96		...
Singer & Frd AIM VCT	100		...
Willington	77½		...
Xenova Warrants	15		...
Yeoman II Equity Units	97	+	½
Yeoman II Inv Tst Cap	6		...
Yeoman II Inv Tst Inc	91½	+	1
Yeoman II Zero Div Pl	112¼		...

EMAP n/p (875)	215	...
Recognition Systems n/p (9)	5½	...
SKD Media n/p (15)	1¼	...

RISES:

Stock	Close	Chng	Chng%
Cortecs	26	+ 7¼	+ 38.6
Dialog	73½	+ 15½	+ 26.7
Utd Carriers	33½	+ 6½	+ 24.0
Systems Intl	57½	+ 10	+ 21.0
Firth Hldgs	21¾	+ 3¾	+ 20.8
Try Group	16	+ 2¾	+ 20.7
Swallowfield	56	+ 7½	+ 15.4
Dudley Jenkins	560	+ 67½	+ 13.7
Johnson Fry	111½	+ 12½	+ 12.6

FALLS:

Stock	Close	Chng	Chng%
Proteome Scies	9	− 2	− 18.1
Old Eng Pub	262½	− 48	− 15.4
Celsis	18	− 3	− 14.2
Capital Inds	60	− 9½	− 13.6
Allied Domecq	516	− 81½	− 13.6
JJB Sports	249	− 38½	− 13.3
Acorn	107½	− 12½	− 10.4
ARM Holdings	1382½	−160	− 10.3
Nord Anglia	128½	− 13	− 9.1
Bass	805	− 74½	− 8.4
Southern Vectis	54½	− 5	− 8.4
Ellis & Everard	201	− 17½	− 8.0
Cornwell Prir	57½	− 5	− 8.0
Mountview	1850	−150	− 7.5

Retailing a sorry story

EVEN a casual observer of high street habits will notice that the British shopper has developed a decided taste for bargains. But the tendency is now confirmed by the pattern beginning to emerge from the Christmas trading statements so far issued by retailers.

This does not just mean that discounters such as Matalan have done well, it also explains why outlets such as Next have achieved sales well above the average. They have persuaded customers that they offer genuine value for money. Kingfisher has also benefited with its Woolworths and Superdrug subsidiaries on the receiving end of good like-for-like sales growth over Christmas. They outshone stablemates Comet and B&Q.

Signet also had a good Christmas, but for a different reason. Its business is now mainly in the US, where customers are spending as enthusiastically as ever. So what of the bloodbath talked of by Sir Richard Greenbury, the M&S chairman? In light of the good news from Matalan et al, it is tempting to conclude that the fuss made about poor sales in the run-up to the festive season was hot air. But this would be a mistake. We have seen only a small proportion of the retailers issue their trading statements. Moreover, overview evidence from the British Retail Consortium points to a flat December and a drop in cumulative three-month sales.

In other words, the worst is yet to come. The signs are that most of the department stores and the clothing chains have been through a very rough time and do not yet seen any sign of a bounce-back. Those brave enough to be interested in the retail sector should stick with the revitalised Next and a solid Kingfisher.

Arjo Wiggins

KEN MINTON may protest the opposite, but the management and divisional reshuffle effected yesterday by the chairman of Arjo Wiggins Appleton, the paper group, looks like the precursor to a break up. Shareholders will certainly hope it is.

The three-way reclassification of Arjo's assets makes some sense because buyers can now clearly see what they are letting themselves in for. Unfortunately, the prices they will be prepared to pay could suffer accordingly.

The Arjo unit in carbonless paper (used for credit card receipts) and thermal paper (old-style fax paper) looks particularly unappetising. Hopes last year that that this might have been sold for £600 million now look seriously optimistic. Both are commodity suppliers in declining markets. Moreover, the whole of Arjo is now worth less than £1 billion.

The special, fine and coated paper division, and the merchanting side, are attractive. But stood against most other businesses the weakness, even in Arjo's stronger elements, is plain.

Arjo has been on the shareholder value crusade for some time. It has backed good intentions with chunky investment capital, too. But the shares have not responded.

Having come so far, shareholders may be inclined to hang on to see if the reshuffle brings trade or financial buyers out of the woodwork. But paper is in danger of joining food production and textiles on the corporate slagheap. Look for an exit.

DISENCHANTED SHAREHOLDER VALUE

450p, 400, 350, 300, 250, 200, 150, 100, 50

FTSE all-share index (rebased) · Arjo Wiggins Appleton share price · Source: Datastream

1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1998

Ellis & Everard

ELLIS & Everard is in scarcely a better position than Arjo.

Alongside most other chemicals companies, and most other firms that find themselves caught in the commodity trap, Ellis is desperately trying to discover more profitable markets. As part of that process Ellis bought a US polymer distributor last summer called Performance Polymers. While it is still too early to pass judgment on the wisdom of that purchase, it is unsettling to see that Ellis's polymer activities in Euope are experiencing price deflation.

The potential in these newer markets looks depressingly stunted, and depressingly similar to the story that has mired bulk chemicals.

However, the current weakness in the global economy makes Ellis's predicament look worse than it may actually be. Distribution of chemicals is not the most attractive of industries, but it is possible to earn a crust — especially if you have Ellis's commitment to cost control.

The shares trade on about eight times prospective earnings. This may sound cheap, but for a business that will be so difficult to grow, it is probably as much as any investor could hope for. If Ellis steers clear of nasties the safeish dividend yield of 6.5 per cent should support the price. But a sudden shock could be disastrous.

At best, hold.

Savills

INVESTORS who have stuck with Savills, the property agent, may be wondering whether they have done the right thing. The stock stalled in late 1997 and then in August last year, it fell off a cliff. The low in October was little short of summer peak.

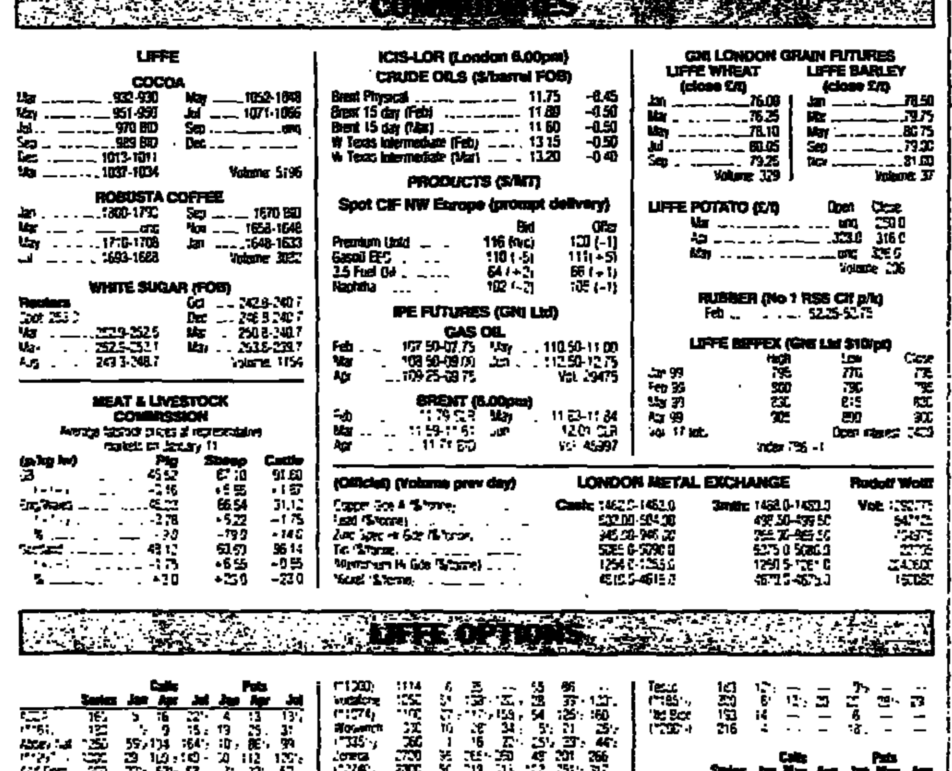
Savills claims it was the victim of a double whammy. On the one hand, it was harmed by a 20 per cent derating of property stocks as investors took a more pessimistic stance on the market. On the other, as a smaller company, it struggles to find favour with institutional investors who prefer the perceived solidity, and better trading liquidity, of big stocks.

This leaves Savills trading on a forward pe ratio of just seven. This, in turn, may prompt its largest institutional shareholder, First Pacific Davies, to consider a takeover bid. If it does, it will have to wait until April, because until then it is restricted from raising its holding beyond 20 per cent. But even the acquisition speculation has failed to kick-start the stock price.

Savills's prospects are not entirely gloomy, however. If interest rates contine to fall after last week's quarter-point cut — remember, base rates are just 3 per cent on the Continent — then property could excite more investor attention. Hold the shares.

EDITED BY ROBERT COLE

COMMODITIES



LIFFE

COCOA

Mar	932-930	May	1052-1048
May	951-950	Jul	1071-1066
Jul	970 BID	Sep	unq
Sep	989 BID	Dec	
Dec	1013-1011		
Mar	1037-1034	Volume: 5196	

ICIS-LOR (London 6.00pm)

CRUDE OILS ($/barrel FOB)

Brent Physical	11.75	−0.45
Brent 15 day (Feb)	11.89	−0.50
Brent 15 day (Mar)	11.60	−0.50
W Texas Intermediate (Feb)	13.15	−0.50
W Texas Intermediate (Mar)	13.20	−0.40

GNI LONDON GRAIN FUTURES

LIFFE WHEAT (close £/t)		LIFFE BARLEY (close £/t)	
Jan	76.00	Jan	78.50
Mar	76.25	Mar	79.75
May	78.10	May	80.75
Jul	80.05	Sep	79.30
Sep	79.25	Nov	81.00
Volume: 329		Volume: 37	

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol
Long Gilt	Mar 99	119.22	119.24	118.45	118.73	45967
Previous open interest 104783	Jun 99				119.83	0
German Govt Bond (Bund)	Mar 99				116.33	0
Previous open interest 0						
Five Year Gilt	Mar 99				108.71	0
Previous open interest 76	Jun 99				108.71	0

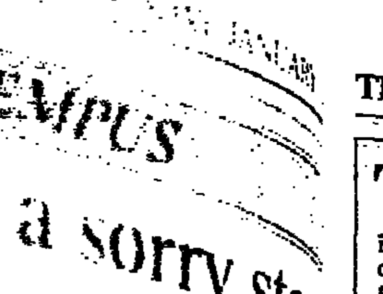
Australia	1.5600-1.5625
Canada	1.5067-1.5077
Denmark	6.4520-6.4550
Euro	1.1533-1.1537
Hong Kong	7.7480-7.7490
Japan	111.90-111.95
Malaysia	3.7998-3.8002
Norway	7.4670-7.4770
Singapore	1.6780-1.6790
Sweden	7.8873-7.8973
Switzerland	1.3918-1.3928

Argentina peso*	1.6283-1.6306
Australia dollar	2.5387-2.5422
Bahrain dinar	0.6075-0.6217
Brazil real*	1.9643-1.9658
Cyprus pound	0.8150-0.8338
Euro	1.4104-1.4126
Finland markka	8.3725-8.5119
Greece drachma	454.00-464.50
Hong Kong dollar	12.6137-12.6192
India rupee	68.50-70.10
Indonesia rupiah	12978.0-13278.0
Kuwait dinar KD	0.4870-0.4984
Malaysia ringgit	6.1861-6.1886
New Zealand dollar	2.9790-2.9837
Pakistan rupee	79.25 Buy
Saudi Arabia riyal	5.8650-6.0024
Singapore dollar	2.7318-2.7343
S Africa rand (com)	9.6100-9.8288
U A E dirham	5.9200-6.0586

Barclays Treasury * Lloyds Bank

3i	2.261	Legal & Gn	1.776
ASDA Gp	15.274	Lloyds TSB	13.924
Abbey Nt	2.504	LucasVarity	2.955
Alliance & Leic	858	Marks Spr	9.274
Allied Dom	9.259	Nat Grid	4.974

LIFFE OPTIONS



Now is the time to tear up Maastricht

The black farce taking place in the European Commission is naturally embarrassing for Europe's political elites, coming as it does just a week after the launch of the single currency. However, they should move swiftly on from *hand-wringing* and see events in Brussels for what they are: the best possible thing to happen for Europe's future.

Europe is already saddled with two powerful, unelected, unaccountable institutions, and getting rid of one of them would be a bonus. The Commission has done its job of rubber stamping even the most outrageous fudges needed for single currency entrants to meet the Maastricht treaty. It should now be disbanded with all its power and policy making transferred to the *national* governments in the euro 11, giving them a bit more muscle to deal with Europe's other unelected, unaccountable institution: the European Central Bank.

Getting rid of the Commission would be an important first step in closing Europe's democratic deficit (empowering the European Parliament would be another). The second step, now that the euro is safely launched, is for euroland governments to tear up the Maastricht model of economic management which has, as Charles Dumas of Lombard Street Research puts it, "dangerously Balkanised policy-making institutions".

Noting that the ECB's "excessive independence" was the price for persuading German voters to give up the mark, he writes: "This model of responsible central bankers mopping up after naughty governments — quite apart from being undemocratic — treats governments as infantile and may thus encourage them to be so."

Many of us have long expected a battle to end all battles eventually to be joined between the ECB and Europe's current politicians, largely elected on promises to end eurosclerosis and, with it, mass unemployment. Few of us expected the fight to be needed so soon.

What has changed is the perception of prospects for the euroland economies. Prospects had looked relatively bright in the months leading up to the euro's launch, but the latest news is ominous. We heard yesterday that German industrial output fell by 2.3 per cent in November, far larger than the 0.7 per cent fall analysts had expected. Industry orders fell by 1.5 per cent in November.

Analysts now believe that German GDP may actually have fallen in the fourth quarter (arguably weaker than Britain), suggesting that the official forecast of 2 per cent growth in 1999 is too optimistic and tending to back the DIW institute that last week cut its forecast for this year from 2.1 per cent to 1.4 per cent.

The news from Germany is the



most alarming in euroland, but things are not too bright elsewhere. A Reuters survey yesterday found that manufacturing activity in the 11 eurozone countries declined in December for the third month in a row. At the same time, inflation is low and falling.

The answer is clear: euroland interest rates are too high and they need to be cut soon. Yet the ECB has said that rates will remain at 3 per cent for the foreseeable future.

In addition, fiscal policy is far too tight for an environment which is close to being deflationary. Because of Maastricht and the Stability and Growth Pact, policy is geared towards balanced budgets, implying a tightening of euroland's structural deficit by 0.3 per cent both this year and next.

Despite the fact that monetary and fiscal policy are ridiculously tight, given clear signs of an economic slowdown in euroland, politicians have still not broken rank. Euroland's medium-term fiscal plans, released before February's Ecofin council meeting, showed a continuing commitment to reduce deficits further.

Even more worrying for Europe's prospects was the new year warning by Heiner Flassbeck, one of Europe's most prominent proponents of *demand* management, that slower growth should not be an excuse for deficit spending. So *much for the return of Keynesianism* to Europe. (Britain stands as an honourable exception, aggressively cutting interest rates and loosening control of public spending to allow automatic stabilisers to work at exactly the right point in the cycle.)

We must presume that Herr Flassbeck was trying to act the fiscal penitent as the euro was launched, but it cannot be possible for the man who is, after all, the former chief economist of the DIW institute to go on advocating tight fiscal policies. If he is, Germany and others in euroland have zero hope of cutting unemployment and Europe has an even more serious deficit in political leadership than it does in democracy.

Given the world's need for a new growth locomotive, we must all hope that euroland's politicians abandon the Stability and Growth Pact and frighten the ECB — by *threatening* a *dramatic* fiscal loosening — into giving its tacit approval and refrain from raising rates and so negate the helpful effects of higher spending.

It is the simplest good sense that slow growth and rising unemployment busts deficit limits even more surely than socialist tax and spend. Spain, on the back of a period of strong growth, is headed for a balanced budget with no need for any further fiscal restraint.

Europe's route map to prosperity is blindingly, idiotically obvious. With low inflation, a popular (with international investors) new currency and relatively low budget deficits, there are simply no arguments against reflation and, boy, it is needed after the years of pre-monetary union restraint.

The prize of growth and jobs is long overdue for a Europe imprisoned by the drive towards monetary union. It would be a tragedy if Europe's politicians are so trapped in the habit of repressing growth that they are unable to seize it.



Twilight for the twin towers: Wembley may lose its most famous feature if current plans to rebuild the 76-year-old stadium are approved, although a number of obstacles still have to be cleared

Classic contest rages at 'venue of legends'

Jason Nissé reports on the battle to fund the future of football's national stadium

It is a classic contest. On one side is Wembley plc, a famous company that recently came within a whisker of insolvency. On the other is Enic, a young, aggressive business, *backed by a secretive* billionaire, whose share price and credibility has been under pressure in recent months. In the middle is the Football Association, a sporting body riddled with turmoil. And at issue is the redevelopment of the most famous football stadium in the world and the chance of England hosting the World Cup in 2006.

The battle over the future of Wembley Stadium has been raging for more two-and-a-half years and was coming close to a conclusion, of sorts, before Enic's intervention last week. Few believe that the investment group will succeed if it goes forward with its 412½p a share bid for Wembley, the owner of the famous stadium, despite Wembley shares being at only 288p before this latest twist in the saga. However, Enic's emergence has shown that there are splits in the board of Wembley as well as massive question-marks over the proposed £320 million redevelopment of the so-called "venue of legends".

No one doubts that Wembley needs rebuilding. The stadium is 76 years old. Its amenities are creaking. The seats are badly spaced and many do not have backs. The pillars holding up the roof spoil the sight lines for thousands of fans. The toilet facilities are largely housed in make-shift cabins. Transport to the stadium is difficult. To leave within an hour of the end of a match is almost impossible.

The stadium's parent company — also called Wembley — expanded by buying the site around the stadium, which includes car parks, the Wembley Arena indoor complex and 43 acres of derelict land. It also bought greyhound tracks in the UK and the US, a gaming business in Rhode Island and the Keith Prowse corporate hospitality business. Over-ambition meant the company ran into financial difficulties in the early 1990s.

Wembley underwent a financial reconstruction which was completed in 1997. The rescue brought many different proposals out of the woodwork, including an offer from Arsenal, the Premiership football team, which is having problems expanding its own stadium. There were dark mutterings about building another national stadium, with venues as diverse as King's Cross, Birmingham and Bradford mentioned. There was even talk of the FA leasing Twickenham for England football games, though both the Rugby Football Union and the local council soon quashed this speculation.

Last April a deal was struck, in principle, with the Sports Council and the Football Association to sell the stadium. This morning the agreement will be signed. Essentially the English National Stadium Development Company (ENSDC), a joint venture between the Council and the FA, will pay £103 million for Wembley and then spend more than £200 million redeveloping it into, in their words, "the best stadium in the world". The redevelopment is the centrepiece of the FA's bid to bring the World Cup to England in 2006, a bid that faces stiff competition from Germany and South Africa and has been hit by the resignation of Graham Kelly, the FA chief executive, and Keith Wiseman, its chairman, over a loan scandal.

This grand plan is to be backed by £120 million from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, the largest award given for a single project. Not surprisingly it has its opponents.

For a start many have questioned the ability of a quango and a sporting association, neither of which have an unblemished record on running commercial ventures, to run a giant stadium. They point to the cost of the project. One quantity surveyor, who did not want to be named because he is still hoping to be hired on the project, said: "Sunderland built the 40,000-seat Stadium of Light for only £20 million. Even Newcastle United's Castle Leazes project was only going to cost £65 million. How can you spend £200 million building an 80,000-seat stadium?"

Then there are *questions* about the development plans, which the ENSDC has yet to submit to the local council, the London Borough of Brent. For a start there was a big row when it emerged that the architects proposed knocking down the famous twin towers at the front of the stadium. It seems that, to make best use of the site, the pitch has to be moved slightly to the north. As the towers are made of concrete and so cannot be *moved they would* have to be knocked down.

And then it emerged that Brent Council is opposed to just redeveloping the stadium without a *project to revitalise* the whole Wembley site. This would involve new roads and better links to the Underground and rail services, issues that all cost money.

Then there are worries about whether it is right that National Lottery grant money should be used to buy the stadium, given that the cash, minus some tax and fees for merchant bankers, will then be handed out to Wembley shareholders. Lottery money is not supposed to go to profit-making ventures.

However, the most crucial objectors to the £103 million stadium sale are three non-executive directors of Wembley — Jarvis Astaire, one of the founders of the company, Roger Brooke, the chairman of Candover, the venture capitalist, and Peter Mead, chairman of Abbott Mead Vickers, the advertising group. Their unhappiness was one of the reasons why the deal with ENSDC was not signed until yesterday and why Enic became involved.

Enic — a company founded by Joe Lewis, the Bahamas-based billionaire, and which *has interests in five European* football clubs including Glasgow Rangers — claims that it was invited to put forward a proposal. It is unhappy that its *interest leaked out, but then it* should be used to that in football. Last year supposed secret talks between Enic and Alan Sugar, chairman of Tottenham *Hotspur, to buy his stake* in the Premier League club magically became common knowledge without either side claiming to have said anything. *The deal* cratered.

However, Enic's offer faces many problems. It is offering 200p in cash — 20p a share more than shareholders would receive in the handout from the ENSDC deal — plus 218½p in Enic shares. However, Enic shares have lost nearly 60 per cent of their value in the past year, largely because of a legal battle with UEFA, the European football governing body, and so its paper is not a strong currency in the City at the moment.

Given that the deal with ENSDC has now been signed, Enic's approach may have come too late. But it is still not clear how ENSDC is going to be able to raise the extra £200 million that it needs to complete its ambitious plans to redevelop Wembley Stadium. This may give Enic an opportunity to still be involved. The "venue of legends" is fast turning into a quagmire of ambitions.

Unassuming Afrikaner has much to offer South Africa

Even as photographs of a *smiling* Johann Rupert rolled off the presses in London yesterday, the man himself was about as far from the limelight as one could get. Overnight, the South African millionaire had boarded the company jet — a well-travelled Falcon — and flown back to Cape Town, where a car was waiting to whisk him to the seaside holiday resort of Hermanus, an hour or so up the coast.

A call to his London office was patched through by satellite to his holiday home — to the kitchen, judging by the clattering of pots and pans — where Rupert, 48, was enjoying the last few days of the school holidays with his wife, Gaynor, and their teenage children, Caroline, Hanneli and Anton. We chatted courteously, about tobacco empires, luxury goods, and apartheid, and Afrikaner fiefdoms, before *Rupert asked to be excused: his* golfing friends were waiting.

Rupert had much on which to reflect as he teed-off in the Cape sunshine. Barely 48 *hours earlier, he had cemented* a deal that would once have been considered unimaginable — the £15 billion merger of Rothmans International and British American Tobacco. How far things had come since the late 1940s, when his father, Anton, won the South African distribution rights to the premier Rothmans brands, Pall Mall and Consulate. Few back then gave the elder Rupert much of a hope against BAT's subsidiary, United Tobacco, which had 80 per cent of the South African market.

Rupert keeps in close touch with his father, now 82, who continues to live in Stellenbosch, the Afrikaans town in the Cape winelands which became the seat of the family tobacco empire, Rembrandt. The deal has come as an immense source of pride to him. "We have a fantastic relationship, in the sense that I speak to him daily, and it is wonderful to have a wise sounding-board. He still goes to the office, and walks a couple of miles a day. He's in good shape."

The younger Rupert spends much of his time in the UK and Switzerland, where Rembrandt's parent company, Richemont, is based. Richemont's interests are spread far and wide — from the Vendôme luxury goods business to Netherhold, the pay-TV business that was sold to Canal Plus.

However, his roots remain firmly in South African soil. He clocks up 500 hours a year in the Rembrandt jet — "my father's Falcon", as he calls it — yet has South Africa's interests at heart. He has a house at Somerset West, looking across the Cape Flats towards Table Mountain. His brother, Anthony, is in the wine business. His sister, also Hanneli, is a mezzo soprano.

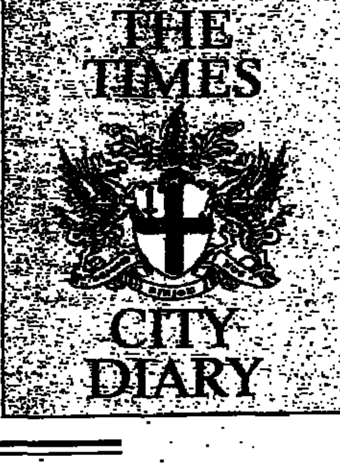
The Ruperts, as Afrikaners, can trace their heritage to 1662, and have no intention of upping sticks. They are of that generation of businessmen who challenged apartheid in its day, and who now feel they have something to offer the "new" South Africa, even if their advice is not *always welcome.*

Rupert says: "Having been against the previous Government, we are in a position to give some advice. The joke is, *in the past, when I was against* racism, I was called a communist, and now that I am against communism, I am called a racist. I'm close to these guys, and if I can't tell them, who can?"

Poignantly, the week has brought both triumph and sadness — with the death of Gavin Relly, former chairman of Anglo American. He died on Sunday, aged 73 — in Hermanus, as it happens — on the eve of the BAT announcement. Anton Rupert accompanied Relly on his historic visit to Zambia in 1985, when a South African contingent infuriated Pretoria by opening talks with the then-banned African National Congress. The two families have been close for years.

Johann Rupert will take a non-executive seat on the BAT board, *but is anxious not to steal* the limelight from Martin Broughton, BAT's chairman. Yet Rupert is every bit the modern businessman, as events this week affirm. And the Falcon jet still has some miles left in it.

JON ASHWORTH



Rank insider

THE two credible outside candidates to replace Andrew "a smile and a profit warning" Teare at Rank are out of the frame, leaving the field open for Douglas Yates, the obvious internal choice.

Ken Hanna, who unbundled Dalgety, yesterday joined Compass Partners, a venture capital outfit set up by John Clark, former chief executive at BET, and a couple of bankers.

Hanna was favourite to become Rank's chief executive but it seems he has tired of the directors' inability to make up their minds. He initially tried to play down speculation about Rank by claiming he did not want to spend his life breaking things up. Now he is on to make a packet picking up the pieces at Compass after other corporate break-ups.

Coincidentally, I hear that the second outside candidate, Claes Hultman of Wembley, has been told by Rank that he will not be getting the job. There is still no sign of that bid that former manager John Garrett was definitely — repeat, definitely — going to make before Christmas, I see.

So expect Yates, acting chief executive, to be anointed in due course. Whether this will be enough to mollify the institutions and restore the Rank fortunes remains to be seen.



"Blues section? Have a look in our accounts department"

THE latest sightings of Nicola, the foul-mouthed eight-year-old, and her advice to the British Airways pilot arrive from as far afield as Air Europe 15 years ago, the Ministry of Defence and the junior section of a small library in rural Cheshire, where her note was swiftly removed from view.

I think we have established that it does not date from a British Airways cockpit last week. I ring my BA source, who is still unrepentant. "It might be a copy of a previous document that was thrust forward to the flight deck," he says. Enough.

So playful

UNEXPECTED signs of a sense of humour from Jacques Attali, polymath and former head of the European Central Bank until expensive tastes led to his downfall. His play about Charles V, the 16th-century Holy Roman Emperor, opens in Paris today and there is a gala performance on January 18.

To the latter he has invited Mikhail Gorbachev and Baroness Thatcher and spouse, who are more likely to be found on the far side of the moon come curtain-up, I would have thought. It is, after all, hard to see the Iron Lady comprehending, let alone tolerating, two hours of turgid history in French about a man who conquered most of Europe.

Still, it all adds to the advance publicity, which our playwright has ensured will be entirely positive. The critics are denied a look at the masterwork until well after the gala night.

Bob a job

THE newspaper advertisment yesterday for a lawyer to earn £1 million, sorry, "to £1 million-plus", which covers a wide range, attracted plenty of publicity for the headhunter involved, QD Legal. Strangely, inquiries show there is no such job.

An executive at the headhunter admitted there is no one position guaranteeing that salary. The "immensely profitable" US law firm involved hopes to fill a number, and one has the "potential" to earn such a high sum — assuming the ability to bring in £3 million to £4 million of new business.

Still, the ad will have brought in the names of a few highly-paid lawyers who might be interested in changing jobs. You never know when these might come in handy.

AN AMERICAN multimillionaire with two Internet company start-ups behind him has quit to spare his latest, USWeb/CKS Corporation, from "public relations complications". As well he might. Joe Firmage, 28, believes advanced technology was handed to us by aliens. So he is off to find them. Firmage, like most Americans, claims he has already met one. "There's a bigger picture out there than just tomorrow's stock price."

Boo hoo

ELSEWHERE in far-out corporate America, Yahoo, the eccentrically named provider of Internet Services, is proving remarkably uncool about a spoof site with a similar name that has emerged. YaHooka is devoted to drug chat and paraphernalia and, as you can see from the illustration below, is not unlike Yahoo's own.

The $40 billion US corporation has already taken action against a sex site with a similar name. But the potheads, based in Oklohoma City, are proving more resilient, or possibly more difficult to spur into anything resembling action. They claim the site does not make a profit and is purely informative.

"The name just came together," drawled a spokesman. "It wasn't a conscious decision." Like, right.

MARTIN WALLER

martin.waller@the-times.co.uk



BUSINESS LETTERS

Airlines, competition and the rival attractions of video-conferencing

From Mr A. G. Phillips

Sir, Cut-throat competition is blamed for BA's current woes (report and Tempus, January 7). Competition is widely believed to be in the best interests of the consumer, though it is difficult to see how, even in the high-tech world of aviation.

Air fares are sky-high, there is congestion both within airports and in the airspace around them and business customers waste valuable working time. Airline load factors remain stubbornly below 70 per cent on average. In total, this represents an enormous waste of resources, energy and potential shareholders' profit.

But, as Tempus wisely observes, more and more firms are discovering the benefits of video-conferencing. Most business meetings are about exchanging ideas.

So why travel at the speed of sound to do so when you can, at far less cost, do so at the speed of light?

Yours faithfully,
ANTHONY G. PHILLIPS,
32 Upper Street,
Salisbury,
Wiltshire SP2 8LY.

Trade with Cuba

From the President, US-Cuba Trade and Economic Council

Sir, Your article "SB to barter for Cuba meningitis vaccine" (*Business News, January 11*) states that "American legislation prohibits trade with Cuba".

This is not true. The Helms-Burton Law permits sanctions against non-United States-based companies which are deemed by the United States Department of State to be using an asset within the Republic of Cuba upon which there exists a claim certified by the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission in Washington DC.

Trade between the United States and the Republic of Cuba is limited, not prohibited.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN S. KAVULICH II,
President,
US-Cuba Trade and Economic Council,
30 Rockefeller Plaza,
New York, NY 10012.

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-do- Income Dist	172.70	183.30	- 0.60	2.70
-do- Accum	594.70	630.30	- 2.20	2.70
Gilt & Fxd Int	49.19	51.68	- 0.41	3.80
Growth Units	380.40	405.60	- 7.10	1.15
Bond	209.60	220.90	- 1.00	4.40
Intl Growth	282.60	300.40	- 1.50	0.11
North American	430.20	456.80	- 1.80	
Far East	189.50	202.70	- 1.40	0.05
UK Smaller Cos	258.40	276.40	+ 0.80	1.23
European	146.00	155.20	- 0.60	0.13
Japanese Growth	28.78	30.46	- 0.21	
High Income	307.90	327.60	- 1.70	2.73

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0161 831 7433 Enq 0161 831 7433 Dlg 0161 831 7465

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American & Gen	371.10	392.40	- 0.10	
European Inc	158.80	168.60	- 0.70	
Smaller Cos (4-1)	105.30	112.10	- 0.29	2.25
Growth	755.90	804.20	- 1.60	1.19
Income & Growth #	593.90	631.90	- 1.90	4.31
-do- Accum #	966.00	1027.70	- 3.00	4.31
Japan & Gen	50.11	52.96	- 1.55	
Hallmark Gwth	1760.00	1834.00†		0.88
-do- Accum	2241.06	2336.00		0.88
Special Sits	173.75	184.80†	+ 0.30	1.19
High Yield	1314.30	1374.00	- 3.00	3.77

CAZENOVE UNIT TRUST MGMT LTD
0171 606 0708

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Cazenove Portfolio	126.94	134.93	..	1.95
American Portfolio	208.82	221.08		0.22
European Portfolio	227.93	242.74		0.26
High Income	60.09	63.52		5.01
Japanese Portfolio	46.75	49.50		
Pacific Portfolio	110.89	119.24		1.78
UK Equity	125.98	134.26		1.62
UK Equity & Bd	72.79	77.56		5.11
UK Smlr Cos	49.90	53.37		2.27

CBF CHURCH OF ENGLAND FUNDS
0171 588 1815

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Inv Fd Inc	1075.59	1091.65	-23.92	3.19
Inv Fd Acc	1150.53	1167.91	-25.96	
Fxd Int Sec Inc	180.44	181.16	- 0.59	7.07
Fxd Int Sec Acc	207.79	208.63	- 0.68	

LAWRENCE KEEN UNIT TRUST MGMT
0171 558 8008

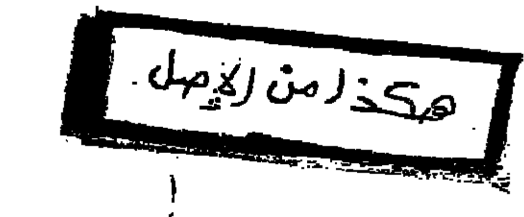
	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Bridge Income #	417.85	444.52	+ 0.83	4.47
Estr Growth	145.78	155.08	+ 5.72	0.58
Inc & Growth	102.99	109.46†	+ 1.01	1.69

MGM UNIT MANAGERS LTD
Dealing: 01277 201 010 Enq: 01903 204 631

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Growth	180.77	192.30	+ 0.97	0.38

MW JOINT INVESTORS LTD

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced Fd #	1588.40	1611.70†		2.80
Income #	1312.16	1333.90†		3.60



Equities reverse early gains

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

1998 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

BANKS

[illegible]

BREWERIES, PUBS & REST

[illegible]

BUILDING MATERIALS

[illegible]

CHEMICALS

[illegible]

CONSTRUCTION

[illegible]

DISTRIBUTORS

[illegible]

DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS

[illegible]

ELECTRICITY

[illegible]

ELECTRONIC & ELECT

[illegible]

ENGINEERING

[illegible]

ENGINEERING, VEHICLES

[illegible]

FOOD MANUFACTURERS

[illegible]

HEALTHCARE

[illegible]

HOUSEHOLD GDS & TEXT

[illegible]

INSURANCE

[illegible]

INVESTMENT TRUSTS

[illegible]

LEISURE & HOTELS

[illegible]

MEDIA

[illegible]

MINING

[illegible]

OIL & GAS

[illegible]

OTHER FINANCIAL

[illegible]

PHARMACEUTICALS

[illegible]

BRITISH FUNDS

SHORTS (under 5 years)

[illegible]

MEDIUMS (5 to 15 years)

[illegible]

LONGS (over 15 years)

[illegible]

UNDATED

[illegible]

INDEX-LINKED on projected inflation of: 5% 3%

[illegible]

PRINTING & PAPER

[illegible]

PROPERTY

[illegible]

RETAILERS, FOOD

[illegible]

RETAILERS, GENERAL

[illegible]

SUPPORT SERVICES

[illegible]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

[illegible]

TRANSPORT

[illegible]

WATER

[illegible]

ALTERNATIVE INV MARKET

[illegible]

Source: FT Information

The In and Out club at No 94 Piccadilly has moved on and one of London's great properties is now for sale, writes **Rachel Kelly**

£50 million buys the home, address and history

For sale: urban splendour on a spectacular scale. One of London's most historic houses, previously home to the Naval and Military Club, officially goes on the market this week for £50 million after months of speculation on its future.

The former home of Lord Palmerston, at No 94 Piccadilly, has been empty since last month when members of the club, nicknamed the "In and Out" after the prominent signs on its gateposts topped with lanterns left after 133 years. Next month they are due to walk across London en masse to new premises in St James's.

FDP Savills and Pannell Kerr Forster are advising its Kuwaiti owners on the sale of the Palladian-fronted building. The owners have investigated the possibility of turning the 50-bedroom establishment into an hotel or possibly a foreign embassy, and have also received expressions of interest from several wealthy foreigners who wish to turn the building back into a private house.

When it reverts to private use the house will be one of the capital's finest properties, complete with ornate ballroom and a wide enclosed courtyard at the back with a fountain and plane trees, beneath which A.E.W. Mason began writing *The Four Feathers*.

Once called Egremont House, the property was built for the 1st Lord Egremont and was designed by Matthew Brettingham between 1756 and 1760. It was later occupied by the Duke of Cambridge, and from 1855 to 1865 it was home to Lord Palmerston. The In and Out club moved in on a long lease in 1866.

As well as boasting a private staircase for Palmerston's spies, it was also the scene of an attack on Queen Victoria by a madman brandishing a stick. It has housed such illustrious men as Scott of the Antarctic and Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouts. The Admiral of the Fleet the Marquess of Milford Haven and the grandfather of the club's president, the Duke of Edinburgh, died on the premises in 1921.

The Grade I listed building is said to be frequented by the ghost of Major W.H. Braddell, wearing his greatcoat. He miraculously survived when a German bomb killed everyone else in the club's dining room in 1940.

A spokesman for FPD Savills refused to comment on the sale, but it is believed to include other property, including the freehold of several nearby shops, and the lease of three houses in Half Moon Street that were previously used as bedrooms by the club. There are thought to be at least 50 bedrooms in the main house, plus a library and the magnificent panelled Octagon room.

The In and Out club has now moved to new premises at 4 St James's Square, once home to Lady Astor, Britain's first sitting woman MP, and later this month Bonhams will be auctioning remaining chattels, including furniture, pictures, mirrors and wooden knick-knacks.

Perhaps the only other London mansion on the market that compares with the In and Out is No 1 Cambridge Gate, Regent's Park. The late Victorian house, with its 40 rooms and domed swimming pool that turns into a ballroom, is unsold at £15 million.

Avril Butt of De Groot Collis, which is handling the sale, is confident that the asking price will be met because this end of the market is "more recession-proof". Palace-seekers prepared to venture beyond the metropolis could consider Luton Hoo, a stately home on a huge 1,500-acre Bedfordshire estate that housed the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh on their honeymoon, and was also used in the hit British film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

The estate includes a Grade I listed mansion, 47 houses and cottages, a lake and parkland. The property was for sale for £25 million more than a year ago and has still not found a buyer. Now the main house, five cottages and 500 acres are for sale for £10 million.

Others could consider Mentmore Towers in Buckinghamshire, on the market since November 1997. A Victorian 60-bedroom mansion that once belonged to Lord Rosebery, the house is accompanied by 80 acres of woodland and ornamental grounds.



Urban splendour: this historic house has been home since 1866 to the Naval and Military Club — known as the In and Out club. The Kuwaiti owners have decided to sell the former home of Lord Palmerston, which has 50 bedrooms, a ballroom and a library

Photograph: James Morgan

Houses? Not in my neck of the woods

Cambridgeshire needs more homes, but it does not want to destroy its green belt. **Diana Wildman** reports

The population of Cambridgeshire is likely to grow at 3½ times the national average over the next 20 or so years. A report by the Office for National Statistics predicts that the number of people living in the county will rise by 24.6 per cent by 2021 to 678,600 — a jump of 134,000. The national average is expected to be 6.9 per cent over that period.

But the popularity of Cambridgeshire is creating some problems. The most serious is the urgent need for new housing, while a complete overhaul of the road network and public transport system is vital.

Cambridge's economic boom and its ability to attract the world's leading high-tech companies — such as Microsoft — is causing a bureaucratic headache for planners keen to preserve the region's past yet faced with the reality of needing more than 100,000 extra homes.

Even at this stage there is a dispute over the number of homes required: a central government figure puts it at 122,500 by 2016 compared with the local authority projection of 96,500. This, coupled with the huge budget required to create a viable transport network linking proposed new "settlements" in the county, will be the subject of a major public planning inquiry to be held at Ely next month. It will allow local councils, housing advisers — including the House-Builders' Federation (HBF) — and individual developers to make their views known to a panel of government-appointed experts.

Christopher Carey, a partner of the East Anglian property consultants Bidwells, says: "Our greatest problem is creating viable new country settlements. Ten years ago, there was an agreement in principle between the local authorities and a consortium of developers to build a 3,000-home project called Cambourne eight miles west of Cambridge, complete with 750,000 sq ft of commercial space, a school, pubs and shops.

"Nothing has happened because there is an impasse between the local authority and the housebuilders. Under the Section 106 agreement, the developers have agreed to provide certain forms of transport including some roads and cycle tracks, but not before they start building. The local authority wants the roads in place beforehand. The developers naturally want to start building before committing themselves."

> The green belt will be violated, we have to put housing somewhere

The greatest problem, Mr Carey says, is transport. "This Government decided to cancel a large number of new road projects which saved billions of pounds. The consequence for Cambridgeshire is to create new villages well away from the city. There has to be a reasonable transport system and now there is no funding available.

"The local authority is keen to build on parts of the Fens but it will take so long to reach Cambridge because of the lack of decent transport facilities that no one will want to move there. It is impractical."

David Henry, head of planning at Savills's Cambridge office, says there must be a fresh approach towards new village plans within the green belt. "The green belt will have to be violated as we simply have to put all this housing somewhere," he says. "Our local papers are full of these problems. Cambridge commuter traffic is so dreadful that more and more people, as they trade up, want to move into the city or live in the more accessible suburbs where, over the past two years, a five-bedroom detached home set in a couple of acres has risen from £400,000 to £500,000," he says. "First-time buyers, however, are waiting longer and want either a two-bedroom flat or house. We have 20,000 students to accommodate during term-time and a large amount of inner-city purchases are by investors."

Marc Cranfield-Adams, a spokesman for HBF, believes that the government recommendation for an extra 122,500 homes is more realistic than the number suggested by the regional planners. "The issue facing planners as recommended by the Government is to take economic growth and the interest of stakeholders into account," he says. "This all has implications, in particular for Cambridge's green belt boundaries, and the House-Builders' Federation will draw attention to the need for an examination of the green belt and the possibility of other forms of development."

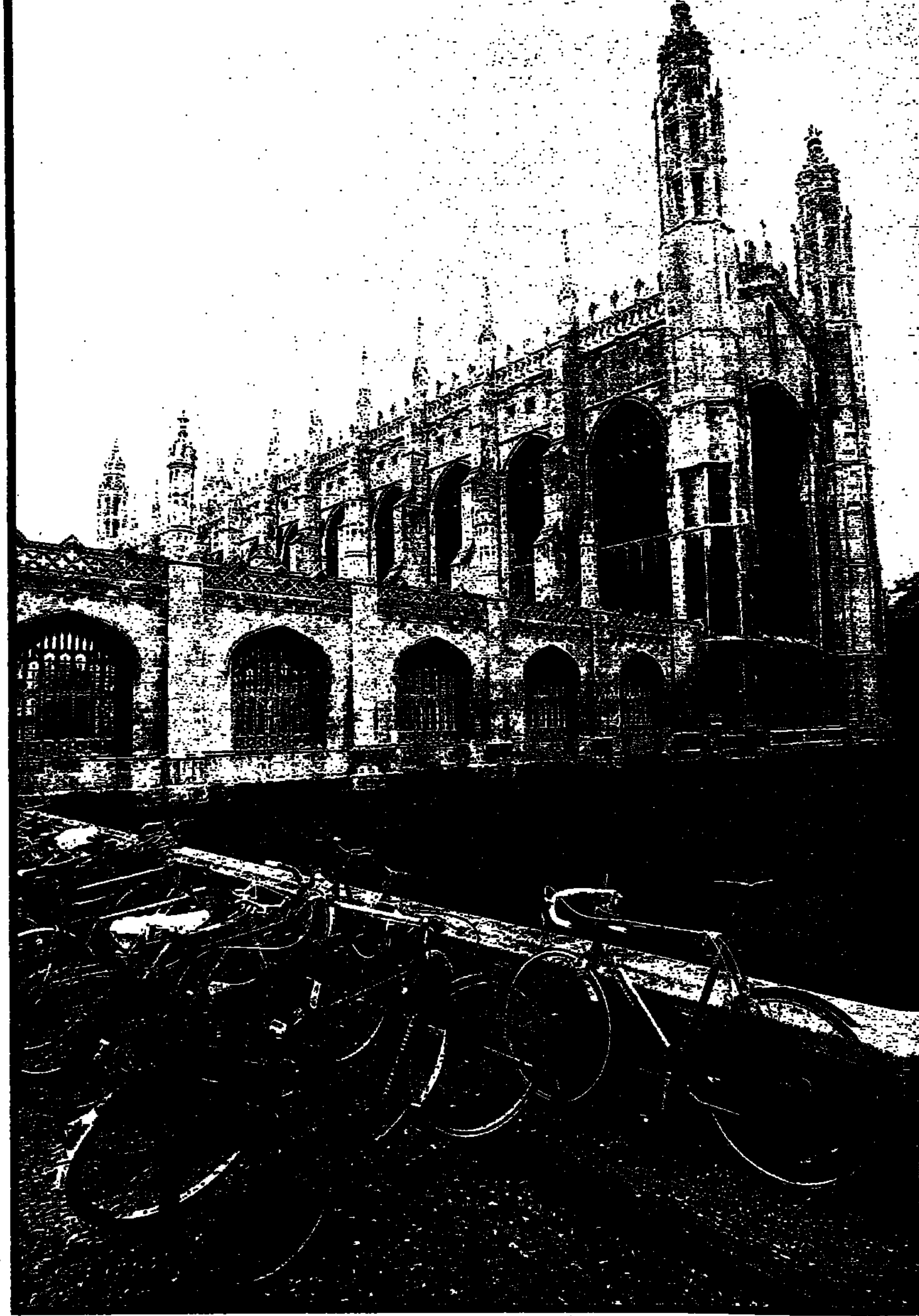
Mr Carey believes that the two fundamental and inescapable issues are an inflexible bureaucracy and the huge amount of funding required to solve the transport and housing problems.

"On one hand, the Government is urging the use of brownfield sites for housing. There are certain areas within Cambridge which are ideal for residential use, such as the old railway sidings in Chesterton in the northeast suburbs. This is where people want to live and environmentally it is an excellent option. But the local authority guidelines and those of the Government, although both Labour, differ. It is all very well for the Government to state that we must increase the housing stock by one quarter but the council doesn't necessarily want to grant a change in planning use on brownfield sites.

"Then there is the requirement for housebuilders to include social housing — up to 25 per cent on any urban scheme. Builders don't like this restraint, especially on a low-density scheme, so a degree of realism simply has to be introduced."

Political infighting must stop, transport and housing must be planned in tandem and developers and the local authority must be more flexible. If this does not happen, it is unlikely that the Government's housing goal for Cambridgeshire by 2016 — and the continuing international investment in the region — will be met.

MICHAEL POWELL



Price of success: bicycles are fine if you live in town, but Cambridge's commuter traffic is a headache for council planners

Why your pet should not be seen or heard

WE MAY be a nation of animal lovers, but when it comes to selling a house, it's often a different story. Dogs on the loose, cat litter trays, hamsters in bedrooms, not to mention more exotic pets, can put potential buyers and estate agents off your property.

Many agents have tales of animal encounters. Nigel Steele, at Strutt & Parker in Norwich, has been bitten four times by dogs while viewing houses, with the last incident costing him a pair of trousers, while John Husband, at Humberts, just managed to dodge a potentially sticky incident with a spitting llama.

Mike Dunning, at Lane Fox in Winchester, still recalls an encounter with a parrot residing in a property he was selling. "The parrot insisted on screeching obscenities at visitors from its perch as they came through the front door. So we covered its cage with a thick duvet and managed to quieten it down," he says.

"We all know that animals, whether they be cats, dogs, guinea-pigs or parrots, form part of the family. But over-affectionate pets, happily barking and jumping up at visitors, can scare people and could put off a potential purchaser.

"Dogs should be banished to the kennel, baskets should be tidied up or away and cats should be removed from the sofa and beds. For many there's nothing worse than a faint waft of dog blankets, gnawed bones or soggy cat litter."

Andrew Dewar, at Curchods, says: "However friendly your pets, hide them away for viewing because you simply do not know what fears, allergies and dislikes prospective purchasers may have. It's not just the animals that can be detrimental to a sale, it's the aftermath, including smells, dog hairs and the mess they make in the garden. Make sure you remove all of the above, as well as the animals, before a viewing."

Michael Bedford, at Bedfords in Burnham Market, recalls clients trying to sell their West Norfolk home: "People were looking round the property and kept complaining about the dogs. I went round for a visit, and it was like having two ponies following you around. It was very intimidating. Eventually I told the vendors to lock their dogs away, and they sold the house shortly afterwards.

"Many people coming out of London do not have large dogs so are naturally wary of them. It is better to put the animals in another room, and when you get to it, ask the viewers if they mind dogs."

THE BRIEFCASE of Conrad Payne, at Cluttons Daniel Smith in Tunbridge Wells, recently came off worse in an encounter with a young pup. Luckily the incident occurred when he was valuing the property.

More exotic pets can also pose problems. James Bailey, at Douglas & Gordon in Fulham, recalls a client who owned a pet piranha, which he fed on live lobster: "As you can imagine, this did little to impress applicants viewing the house, and eventually we had to co-ordinate feeding times so that they didn't coincide with viewings."

A python held up the proceedings for Hamptons International in Fulham last year. The first time the buyer viewed the flat, the snake was in a cage and he particularly said that he hated reptiles.

At the second viewing, the party was halfway round the house when they suddenly noticed that the snake was not in his cage. The buyer left in an instant. Just before he was about to exchange, he made the negotiator go round to the flat with him to check that the snake was not there.

But imagine buying a house complete with an unruly pet. A property for sale, with a resident Vietnamese pot-bellied pig, posed something of a problem for Mr Steele. The pig had taken over the vendors' lives completely, and they had decided that selling up was the only way to get away from their pet.

"It was a pretty house, but most people ran a mile," Mr Steele says. "Someone did actually buy, but I am not sure how long the pig lasted."

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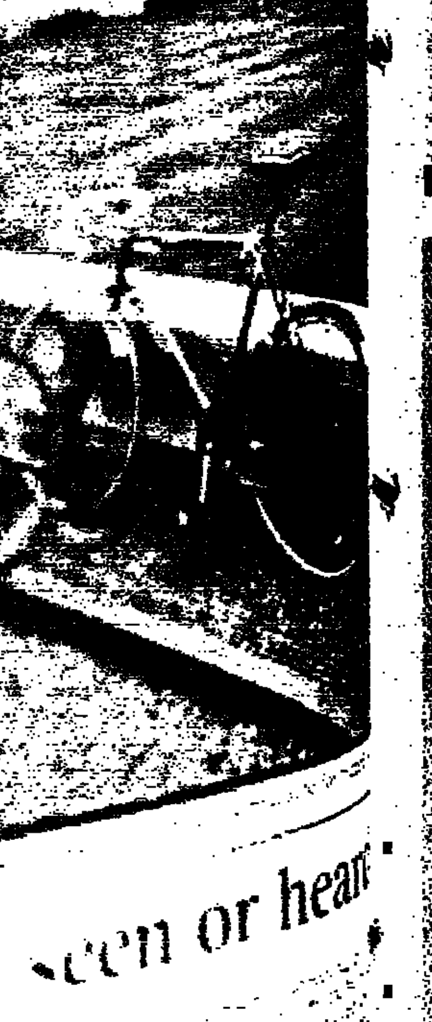
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Court of Appeal

Law Report January 13 1999

Court of Appeal

Non-party's entitlement to papers

Gio Personal Investment Services Ltd v Liverpool and London Steamship Protection and Indemnity Association Ltd and Others (FAI General Insurance Company Ltd intervening)

Before Lord Justice Butler-Sloss, Lord Justice Potter and Sir Patrick Russell

[Judgment December 21]

A non-party to an action was entitled to inspect and make copies of written opening submissions or skeleton arguments to which reference was made by the judge at trial. A non-party was not entitled to inspect documents referred to in a witness statement or the documents on the judge's reading list.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment in allowing in part an appeal brought by FAI General Insurance Company Ltd against the refusal by Mr Justice Timothy Walker of their applications to inspect and/or take copies of various documents referred to in open court and taken as read in the course of a trial in which FAI were not a party.

Mr Brian Leveson, QC and Miss Tina Cook for FAI; Mr Colin Edelman, QC and Mr David Joseph for Godfrey Merrett Robertson Ltd (GMR); Miss Helen Davies for Ocean Marine Mutual Protection and Indemnity Association Ltd.

LORD JUSTICE POTTER said that FAI were currently defendants in proceedings brought by Ocean Marine Mutual Protection and Indemnity Association Ltd and Ocean Marine Mutual Insurance Association Europe OV (OMM) in which OMM sought recovery of sums due under contracts of reinsurance made between OMM and FAI in 1993, 1994 and 1995.

FAI had purported to avoid the contracts of reinsurance for misrepresentation/non-disclosure and defend upon those grounds. The contracts of reinsurance were made via a chain of brokers in London and Australia. The same chain of brokers was involved in placing a number of reinsurance contracts which were the subject matter of the trial before Mr Justice Timothy Walker in the present action.

The present action centred on the avoidance of reinsurance contracts by the plaintiffs, Gio Personal Investment Services Ltd of the reinsured, Liverpool and London Steamship Protection and Indemnity Association.

The placements of those contracts was broadly contemporaneous with those in the OMM action. The brokers were the same two particular individuals.

Prior to trial, Gio and Liverpool and London settled. Liverpool and London in turn settled their third party proceedings against the first, second and third third parties.

At the trial, the effective plaintiff was GMR pursuing claims for indemnity and/or damages against the sub-brokers, Chapman & Co. Mr Jonathan Chapman and GAK (Reinsurance) Party Ltd.

On June 2, 1998 short opening speeches were made by Mr Edelman, QC, for GMR and Mr Tomlinson, QC, for GAK. Mr Edelman made it clear that he had a written opening which he placed before the judge saying that he did not wish to develop it that day but preferred the judge to read it in conjunction with a lengthy opening statement for GAK, following which he would deal with any of the judge's queries. He then elaborated on the issues as they emerged from the opening and Mr Tomlinson did the same.

The judge indicated that he would spend the next few days reading indicating that he would be completed by June 8, when the parties re-attended court.

By June 8, GMR and GAK had settled and GMR proceeded against Chapman and Co and Mr Chapman who did not appear.

On June 2, prior to the openings, FAI's solicitors had written to GMR's solicitors requesting that they make available copies of the skeleton arguments lodged by counsel, the trial bundles and daily transcripts as they became available, all against FAI's undertaking to pay reasonable charges.

GMR did not comply and on June 8 representations were made to the judge on FAI's behalf. The judge indicated that it was inappropriate for FAI to intervene without notice.

On June 10, Mr Justice Walker delivered a judgment in respect of the claims against Chapman and Co and Mr Chapman which effectively concluded the litigation.

Mr Leveson, QC, who now appeared for FAI, immediately applied to inspect and take copies of the skeleton arguments, trial bundles, reading list submitted by the parties and lists of witnesses submitted to the judge after the trial had begun.

FAI put their case on the basis of their entitlement as any member of the public although they did not conceal their underlying purpose motivating their application.

Mr Justice Walker had rejected the application saying that while he considered that the court had inherent jurisdiction to make the order sought, in the exercise of his discretion the application would be rejected.

On the appeal, FAI limited the order they sought to obtaining copies of documents referred to in the witness statements, any written opening skeleton arguments and any document which the judge was either specifically requested to read or which was included in any reading list.

In so far as the application of FAI as a non-party for access to documents used or referred to in evidence in the course of trial was based upon the provisions of Order 38, rule 2A of the Rules of the Supreme Court, it seemed to his Lordship to be doomed to failure for two reasons.

First, on their plain words, they imposed upon the court a power in respect of witness statements only and did not extend to cover documents referred to in those statements.

Second, nothing in the history or context of the introduction of the rule led one to suppose that the Rules Committee intended thereby to introduce a provision which would enable a third party to the litigation to obtain access to inter partes documents which had previously, unless by agreement with the parties, been unavailable to any member of the public whether or not he or she attended court to hear the oral evidence of the witness in question.

The purpose of rule 2A focused on increasing the efficiency of the inter partes process from a procedural point of view. The rule sought to accelarate the disclosure of the parties' evidence as between themselves, however, it was not intended otherwise to disturb the inter partes balance of advantage in the litigation or to prejudice the rights of the litigating parties outside the confines of the rule.

So far as the written openings, skeleton arguments and the documents referred to therein were concerned, Mr Leveson put his case on very broad grounds, recognising that, in seeking an order other than under Order 38, rule 2A, he had to rely on the inherent jurisdiction of the court to regulate its own procedures.

In his Lordship's judgment, so far as the opening, or other, speeches of counsel were concerned, while a member of the public attending court would have the benefit of hearing them and be free to report them, there was no provision or requirement for the taking of a shorthand note or for other form of record for the benefit of the public. No doubt that was because, for the purposes of any subsequent appeal, it was the evidence before the judge and his stated reasons which were essential to the validity of his decision.

So far as concerned documents which formed part of the evidence or court bundles, there had historically been no right, and there was currently no provision, which enabled a member of the public present in court to see, examine or copy a document simply on the basis that it had been referred to in court or read by the judge.

If and in so far as it might be read out, it would enter the public domain and a member of the press or public could quote what was read out, but his right of access to it for purposes of further use or information depended upon his ability to obtain a copy of the document from one of the parties or by other lawful means.

There was no provision by which the court might, regardless of the wishes of the parties to the litigation, make such a document available to a member of the public.

Nor, so far as such documents were concerned, did his Lordship consider that any recent development in court procedures justified the court contemplating such an exercise under its inherent jurisdiction.

On the other hand, the arguments for such an exercise in respect of the written submissions of counsel or skeleton arguments which were used as a substitute for oral submissions seemed to his Lordship to be a good deal stronger.

In exercising his discretion, Mr Justice Walker seemed to have regarded the particular interest and purpose of FAI in seeking to obtain copies of counsel's written submissions, namely to obtain a full understanding of the issues and to identify the documents going to those issues as the possible subject for subpoena in parallel litigation, as a reason to refuse access which he might otherwise have been disposed to grant to a differently motivated member of the public.

Yet, quite apart from the interest of the press, who were members of the public for this purpose, most people who attended a trial when they were not parties to it or directly interested in the outcome did so in furtherance of some special interest, whether for the purposes of education, critique or research, or by reason of membership of a pressure group, or for some other ulterior but legitimate motive. It did not seem to his Lordship that the purpose of FAI in the case was in any sense improper.

In his Lordship's view, the appropriate judicial approach to such an application in a complicated case was to regard any member of the public who for legitimate reasons applied for a copy of counsel's written opening or skeleton argument, when it had been accepted by the judge in lieu of an oral opening, as prima facie entitled to it.

The appeal would be allowed to the extent of ordering FAI and OMM be entitled to inspect and make copies of the written opening submissions or skeleton arguments to which reference was made by the judge at trial.

Sir Patrick Russell and Lord Justice Butler-Sloss agreed.

Solicitors: Clyde & Co, Guilford; Reynolds Porter Chamberlain; Barlow Lyde & Gilbert.

Contract not apt in divorce deal

Xydhias v Xydhias

Before Lord Justice Stuart-Smith, Lord Justice Thorpe and Lord Justice Mummery

[Judgment December 21]

Ordinary contractual principles did not determine the question whether parties had concluded an agreement for ancillary relief in divorce proceedings.

If there was a dispute as to whether negotiations led to an accord abbreviating ancillary relief proceedings, the court had a discretion in determining whether an accord had been reached.

The Court of Appeal so stated in a reserved judgment, dismissing an appeal by Harry Costas Xydhias from the dismissal by of Judge Hamilton on November 5, 1997 in Birmingham County Court, of his appeal against the order of District Judge Hargreaves on November 25, 1996, and holding that pre-trial negotiations between the husband and his wife, Chrystalla Xydhias, amounted to an agreement for the purposes of an abbreviated ancillary relief hearing under section 23 of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973.

The wife had petitioned for divorce in 1994 and applied for ancillary relief. Lengthy and detailed pre-trial negotiations took place shortly before the hearing and the amount of the lump sum and the number of instalments appeared to be agreed together with other details, although no document setting our the terms was signed by the parties and no agreement was reached as to how the payments should be secured. Various draft orders were prepared but not signed by the parties.

The wife's solicitors wrote to the court requesting a short appointment. But a few days before the hearing the husband sought to resile from the agreement and to vary the terms of the instalments.

The wife applied for an order that the husband show cause why an order should not be made in the terms of the agreement reached. The application was heard as a preliminary issue.

Mr Patrick Eccles, QC and Mr Edward Hess for the husband; Mr Michael Horowitz, QC and Mr Timothy Bishop for the wife.

LORD JUSTICE THORPE said that counsel for the husband submitted that the ordinary contractual principles summarised in *Pagnan SpA v Feed Products Ltd* ([1987] 2 Lloyd's Rep 601) applied.

His Lordship's cardinal conclusion was that ordinary contractual principles did not determine the issues in the appeal.

That was because of the fundamental distinction that an agreement for the compromise of an ancillary relief application did not give rise to a contract enforceable in law.

The parties seeking to uphold a concluded agreement for the compromise of such an application could not sue for specific performance. The only way of rendering the bargain enforceable, was to convert the concluded agreement into an order of the court.

The court did not either automatically or invariably grant the application to give the bargain the force of an order. It conducted an independent assessment to enable it to discharge its statutory function to make such orders.

It was clear that the award to an applicant for ancillary relief was always fixed by the court. The payer's liability could not be ultimately fixed by compromise as in the settlement of claims in other divisions.

The purpose of negotiation was not to finally determine the liability but to reduce the length and expense of the process by which the court carried out its function.

If there was a dispute as to whether the negotiations led to an accord that the process should be abbreviated, the court had a discretion in determining whether an accord had been reached.

In exercising that discretion the court should be astute to discern the antics of a litigant who, having consistently pressed for abbreviation, sought to resile and justify his shift by reliance on some point of detail that was open for determination by the court at its abbreviated hearing.

If the court concluded that the parties agreed to settle on terms, it might have to consider whether the terms were vitiated by a factor such as material non-disclosure, or tainted by a factor within the parameters set in *Edgar v Edgar* ([1980] 1 WLR 1410).

Finally, in every case the court had to exercise its independent discretionary review applying the section 25 criteria to the circumstances of the case and to the terms of the accord.

That approach particularly applied to accords intended to obviate delivery of briefs for trial. Different considerations might apply to agreements not negotiated in the shadow of an impending fixture.

There were two lessons for specialist practitioners:

First, to distinguish clearly between the two stages of negotiation:

(i) establishing what the applicant was to receive, expressed in simple terms in heads of agreement signed by both counsel and their clients;

(ii) expressing the heads of agreement in the language of an order of the court, a task to which the parties ordinarily made little contribution. The signature of the parties to a draft consent order hardly seemed apt.

Second, it was desirable that counsel should explicitly agree whether their negotiations were open or without prejudice. Ordinarily they were likely to be without prejudice and if they did not achieve a concluded agreement the aftermath was likely to be an exchange of *Calderbank* letters [reserving the right to refer on the issue of costs to a without prejudice offer] (*Calderbank v Calderbank* ([1976] Fam 93) and/or open correspondence.

On the evidence before him the district judge was right to hold that the parties had concluded a compromise.

Lord Justice Stuart-Smith and Lord Justice Mummery agreed.

Solicitors: Blakemores, Leamington Spa; Mercy Messenger, Solihull.

Discretion to make compensation grant

Regina v Law Society, Ex parte Nielsen

Before Mr Justice Sullivan

[Judgment December 3]

Guideline 3 in the schedule to the Solicitors Compensation Fund Rules 1995, which concerned losses for which grants would not be made, did not unlawfully fetter the discretion of the compensation fund committee of the Law Society to make a grant under section 36(2) of the Solicitors Act 1974.

Mr Justice Sullivan so held in the Queen's Bench Division when dismissing an application for judicial review of the refusal on June 18, 1998 of Kirsten Aagaard Nielsen's application for a grant out of the fund.

Mrs Nielsen had deposited £1.2 million into a bank account under the control of a solicitor, Charles Julian Deacon, on the strength of his undertaking that he would hold the money until completion of a transaction, and would repay it to her if the transaction was not completed within a certain time. Mr Deacon was then fraudulent, and the money was never recovered.

Mr A. Leolin Price, QC, for Mrs Nielsen; Mr David Pannick, QC, for the Law Society.

MR JUSTICE SULLIVAN said that he had no doubt that the Law Society had the power to formulate and apply general policy guidelines, provided that they were not applied inflexibly and without regard to the circumstances of a particular case.

His Lordship was referred to *R v Law Society, Ex parte Mortgage Express Ltd* ([1997] 2 All ER 348, 359-360). That case was concerned with mortgage frauds facilitated by dishonest solicitors hence the emphasis upon the primary purpose of the fund being to replace money which had been taken by solicitors for their own benefit.

The court was not concerned with the question of whether the solicitor was the applicant's own solicitor: see also *R v Law Society, Ex parte Ingman Foods Oy AB* ([1997] 2 All ER 666, 668).

In his Lordship's view, section 36(2) conferred a broad discretion on the Law Society. Bearing in mind the primary purpose of the fund as described *Mortgage Express* and *Ingman Foods*, it was lawful for the Law Society to formulate guidelines which stated that in certain cases falling outside that primary purpose they would not normally make a grant if the applicant had contributed to the loss by failing to ascertain a reasonable standard of care.

It was to be noted that paragraph 3(d) did not apply to the ordinary lay client of a solicitor seeking help with day to day problems such as divorce, house purchases and so on but to applicants who were business or professional people engaging in their business or professional activity. It was not unreasonable to expect a higher standard of care from such persons engaged in such activities.

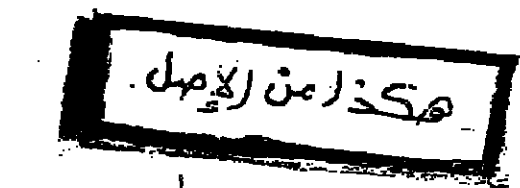
There was sufficient flexibility within the rules to take into consideration those cases where such a business person had made a minimal contribution to the loss.

Rule 16 far from saying that the guidelines should be followed emphasised that they could be taken into consideration, but must not be allowed to fetter the court's discretion. The guideline itself used the word "normally".

In his Lordship's judgment, the committee's concerns regarding each of the factors mentioned in the decision letter was fully justified.

Solicitors: Gouldens; Russell-Cooke Potter & Chapman, Putney.

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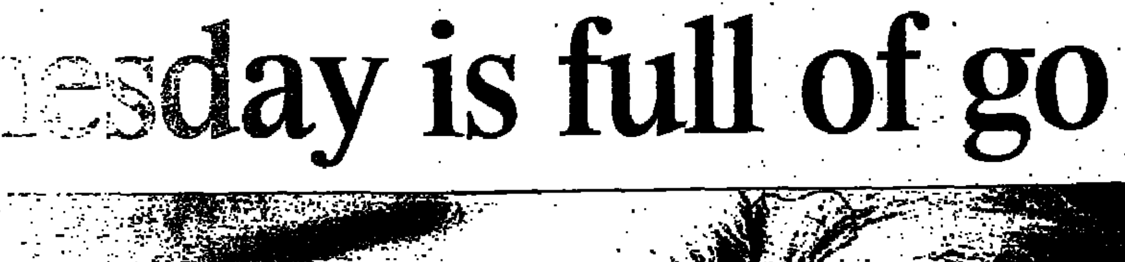
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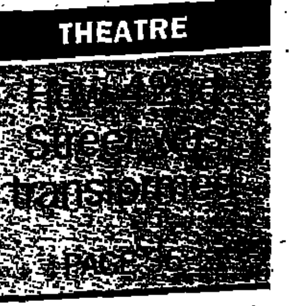
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DANCE
Cinderella fitfully revived at the Coliseum
PAGE 35







Child W[illegible]nesday is full of go

After ten years in films, 18-year-old Christina Ricci remains refreshingly cynical. **Sheila Johnston** reports

For many of her fans Christina Ricci will be forever Wednesday, the adorably malevolent, poker-faced nine-year-old she played in the two Addams Family films. "They still identify me with her," the actress says. "That's OK — it's not like I was in *The Parent Trap*. And it made them apprehensive about approaching and talking to me, which was fine. Because I don't really like people all that much.

"I hated being a kid because someone was always telling you what to do. Everyone assumes you're an idiot. The best thing about being an adult is not being condescended to.

"And also," adds the 18-year-old (19 next month) Ricci, who has been smoking regularly since she was 15, "I can now legally buy cigarettes in America."

> 'I hated being a kid; it's assumed you're an idiot'

That's the stuff to give the ticket-buying troops who will no doubt line up to experience Ricci's latest incursion into bad-girl territory. Friday sees the opening of *The Opposite of Sex*, an acerbic comedy about a group of sexual misfits. She stars as Dedee, a trailer-trash blonde who visits her gay half-brother, seduces his lover, then persuades him that he has fathered her baby.

She is also the film's narrator, keeping up an acid-tongued commentary on the convoluted plotline and pitiful dramatis personae. "I don't have a heart of gold and I don't grow one later," Dedee confides cheerfully: like Wednesday, she's the kind of baleful character with whom audiences love to identify.

Ricci was talent-spotted, aged eight, in a school pageant supplying a sardonic commentary on *The Twelve Days Of Christmas* ("all a kid wants for Christmas is a basketball, but she gets dumb presents like a partridge in a pear tree"). Her auspicious screen debut was opposite Winona Ryder and Cher in *Mermaids* (1990), a comedy about fraught mother-daughter relationships, followed by the two Addams Family films and the children's ghost movie *Casper*.

Then came a rocky patch, with duds like *Gold Diggers: The Legend Of Bear Mountain*, *That Darn Cat* and *The Cemetery Club*. And an actress could build quite a reputation (not to mention a bank balance) on the movies for which Ricci admits [illegible] rejected: *Jurassic Park*, *B[illegible] & Robin*, *Lolita*, *Little Women*, *Interview With the Vampire* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

But finally there was *The Ice Storm*, Ang Lee's glacial [illegible] comedy of sexual [illegible] and emotional deep freeze in 1970s American suburbia [illegible] turned out to be that rare [illegible] *succès d'estime* which [illegible] a respectable international box-office hit. Ricci [illegible] applauded for her [illegible] poignant portrait of [illegible] ate, sexually precocious [illegible] er. She had officially [illegible] age.

Since then she has [illegible] constant [illegible] by some of the industry's [illegible] nent [illegible]. Last year she was seen [illegible] crazed [illegible] Terry Gilliam's *Fear and Loathing in Las [illegible]* and as a [illegible] town dancer [illegible] cent Gallo's [illegible] choly drama *Buffalo 66*, and [illegible] heard as one of the voices in Joe Dante's semi-animated feature *Small Soldiers*.

So much work, so [illegible] time. Has it left Ricci happy in herself? "Yeah. I'm OK," she grunts, adding, almost as an afterthought lest this sound too brusque, "thank you." [illegible] might be forgiven for [illegible] she admits to having suffered from anorexia, then [illegible] ty crashed in, acquiring [illegible] ing curves, not all of [illegible] wanted (although she [illegible] likes to describe *The Opposite of Sex* as "all about [illegible] age"). She went through a phase of burning herself [illegible] cigarettes and maintains a therapist on each American coast.

Indeed the power of Ricci's performances [illegible] from her singular [illegible] of innocence and [illegible] bitten maturity. [illegible] age she seems formidably experienced. "You may [illegible] Well, I've been in the [illegible] for ten years. I [illegible] talking about when [illegible] work, but not when [illegible] life."

According to Don Roos, writer-director of *The Opposite of Sex*, "[illegible] tough cookie, but at [illegible] time she has a very [illegible] quality to her. She [illegible] dee in her honesty, her [illegible] ness and her impatience [illegible] pretension. She has [illegible] courage too, she [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] very dark [illegible] her own per[illegible] [illegible] offensive and [illegible] [illegible] as fierce[illegible] [illegible] learnt to [illegible] three [illegible] dia[illegible] [illegible] film script *Asylum*, about "a group of youths who feel dead when they are unable to make the transition to adulthood"), but also as someone who does not suffer fools gladly.

She speaks scornfully of the "weak producers" who made life difficult on *Buffalo 66*, and of unprofessional colleagues. "I prefer people who have been in this business a long time. There are certain courtesies that younger actors just don't know. I'm very comfortable with acting. And I couldn't think of anything I'd rather do: I don't have any save-the-world ideals. But certain situations are difficult, like when you hate the people you work with."

She owns her own production company, but claims to have no long-term game plan. "Yeah, well, anyone can have one, you just have to register with the Government. I don't think I would know how to be a Hollywood player. I wouldn't do something cheesy just because I was going to make a ton of money."



[illegible] *Addams Family* to *The Opposite of Sex*, Christina Ricci has remained herself — no easy feat when you're not yet 19

[illegible] reports on growing unease about the South Bank Centre's plans

[illegible]k before you demolish



FRANCESCO GUIDICINI

Whither the Hayward Gallery and Queen Elizabeth Hall?

[illegible] dismissed. That possibility horrifies the many distinguished groups for whom the QEH serves as an irreplaceable London base. Many say they would be lost without it.

"It's a deliberately provocative statement to an orchestra [illegible]. It would be a disaster," says David Pickard of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, one of the South Bank's resident orchestras. "A tragedy," says Val Bourne, director of Dance Umbrella, [illegible] for several weeks each [illegible] the QEH with enthusiastic audiences for contemporary dance. "Cultural suicide," [illegible] American choreographer Stephen Petronio, whose [illegible] company has performed at the QEH for ten years.

For smaller orchestras the other Central London venues are either [illegible] or uneconomic. "At the [illegible] Hall you both sound [illegible] minuscule," says [illegible] Ballardie, veteran manager of the English Chamber Orchestra, "and the Wigmore can only take 15 on its platform. The QEH is terribly [illegible] — there simply is no other medium-sized venue."

For contemporary dance the situation is even more urgent. Bourne says the QEH is the only available space between the 300-seat Place Theatre and the much larger Sadler's Wells which, after its rebuilding, charges more than most groups can pay. "A whole area of contemporary dance would not survive," she says. "Take away the QEH and you take away affordable contemporary dance." Petronio agrees. "You would have top-end ballet and nothing else."

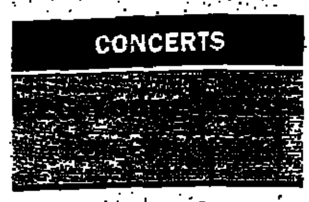
As far as the merits of replacing the existing building go, opinions seem evenly divided. Many would be glad of a better equipped and bigger stage, and especially of improved entertainment facilities for the all-important corporate sponsors. Orchestras complain, too, that the number of seats is too low to be economically viable. They would prefer 1,200 or even 1,500 to the present 900.

But others see nothing wrong that can't be fixed. Richard Alston, whose dance company appears annually at the QEH, says the hall is much maligned. "I'm certainly not asking for a new venue," he protests. "I have a lot of affection for it. It's not beautiful, but it's comfortable and audiences like it. It's nonsense to say they find it inhospitable."

Alston's view is supported by the hall's impressive attendance record. Dance Umbrella notched up 79 per cent paid attendance during its last three-week season. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment puts its average figure at 90 per cent. Petronio says that all his dates have sold out for as long as he can remember. "The testimony is that the audiences go," he claims.

"The QEH is a home for many groups," Ballardie adds. "If they don't have a home, they will wither." Nobody denies that the South Bank is in urgent need of first aid, and most are hoping for the best, while waiting for the centre's still-embryonic plans to be fully fleshed out. But the message is that any prevarication over the new venue will be fiercely resisted. In that case, say all, better to stick with the present one, with all its limitations, than run the risk of losing such a vital resource for good.

Puffed out by the joy of sax



Young artists can move fast these days, and some performers in the final concert of the Park Lane Group's January showcase already had a CD to hawk: coming in February, we were told, on the Black Box label. These were the **Quartz Saxophone Quartet**, former pupils at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama of John Harle, who has done so much to bring the instrument to the forefront in new British music. There they were, four fresh-faced men, brilliantly demonstrating the saxophone's ability to croon like Bing Crosby, wail like a Weimar jazz band and burble like an upset stomach.

Or make the players go red in the face. This happened, inevitably, during Michael Nyman's *Songs for Tony*, written in memory of his late business manager, Tony Simons. Nyman's driving style suits massed saxophones well, although you wonder how long he can go on filling new bottles with his old wine (especially the score to *The Piano*).

Chuntering Nymanesque riffs also featured in Gary Carpenter's mercurial suite *Une Semaine de Bonté*, a Quartz commission, inspired by one of Max Ernst's surreal picture novels. With four saxophones, however, a little wayward ebullience went a long way.

The quartet left the best to last: Gavin Bryars's *Alaric I or II*, from 1989. Some Bryars pieces consist of fascinating programme notes with pallid music attached. But this was the real McCoy, soaring and tender, alive with varied textures, beguiling ears and testing the players by forcing alto and baritone saxes to play at the top of their range. No wonder the group removed their jackets to play it.

Pianist **Kanae Furomoto**, trained at the Royal Academy of Music, sensibly stuck to her red velvet dress. But was her choice of music wise? Tippett's Second Sonata emerged as though played under water, the force of its gnarled chords and sudden silences subdued. Furomoto also played some of Ligeti's *Etudes* and Michael Finnissy's balletic cut-ups, *Strauss-Walzer*, but never sounded happier than when she was trickling through Karen Tanaka's *Crystalline II* (imagine one of Messiaen's songbirds stalking a frozen pond).

Earlier, **Chamber Domaine** had demonstrated the thrill of watching young players successfully scaling Mount Everest. Brian Ferneyhough's String Trio arrived with a score pasted on to oblong boards, with bits poking out top and bottom; players navigated the jungle of notes with exhilarating bravery and expressive force.

GEOFF BROWN

Oeuvre omelette good in parts

Historically, it happened: all 69 of Haydn's string quartets have been performed during the course of a weekend at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. But, philosophically, can it be said to have happened unless every one of them was heard by at least one person? In order to qualify that person could legitimately have left out the master classes, seminars and children's events, but would have had to keep awake through 14 full-length concerts, five tea or coffee concerts and two candle-lit late-night events — all between Friday midday and Sunday evening.

Attendance at a Service of Contemplation at a penitentially early hour on Sunday morning would not have been obligatory but, since that was the setting for the string-quartet version of the *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, it would obviously have been desirable. It would also have added one more to the tally of ensembles heard during the HaydnFest weekend. There were literally dozens of them, ranging from the amateur Adria Quartet to the evangelistic Wellspring Quartet and including at mid-alphabetical point the coyly named Quatuor Nostalgique made up largely of refugees from the full-time string-quartet treadmill. The artistic director of the HaydnFest, Christopher Rowland — formerly of the Fitzwilliam Quartet, now director of chamber music at the RNCM — was one of them.

Clearly, taking all the statistics into account, this was rather different from the complete quartet performance delivered by a select group of Haydn specialists over the course of three weeks at the Edinburgh Festival a couple of years ago. Inevitably, with so many different ensembles involved, most of them assembled from students of the RNCM School of Strings and entrusted with one work each, it was a patchy experience. It was more than an egg-eating competition or a dance marathon, however: if only one of those ad hoc quartets is inspired by the Haydn exposure to stay together and become another Brodsky it will have transcended its immediate book-of-records achievement.

The Brodsky Quartet, which emerged from the RNCM 20 years ago, was one of the five established string quartets which contributed a full-scale concert to the event. An exemplary exponent of textural clarity, unshakeably secure in ensemble and tuning, technically impeccable in all but one or two details, it is just the group to demonstrate the inner workings of Haydn's resourceful string-quartet thinking. For a demonstration of the wit, the passion, the creative energy in these works, one would have to turn to an ensemble less discreet in its choice of tempi, less modest in expression, less cool in its general attitude.

GERALD LARNER



A hard sister act to follow



THEATRE

It isn't Frank's day. He has been in Düsseldorf selling health foods, and during his absence his mother-in-law has died. Since Europe is enduring a winter freeze, it has taken him 14 hours to get back to Yorkshire, and he has spent much of that time being bored by "a woman from Carlisle who runs a puppet theatre for the deaf". And what happens when he arrives home? His wife Teresa and her two sisters are at each others' throats and, before long, at his too. "It's like marrying into the Borgias," decides Mark Lambert's doleful Frank.

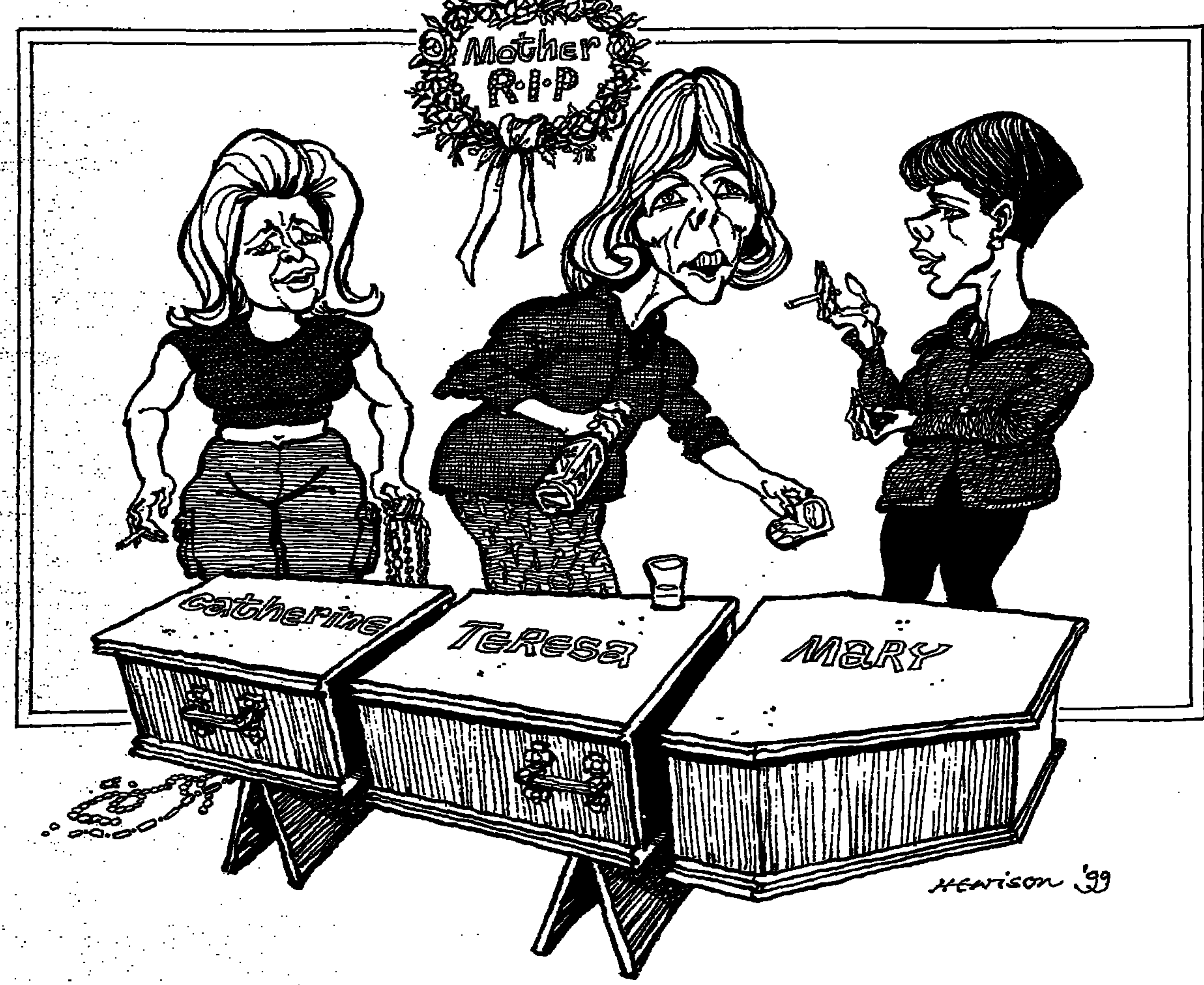
At best *The Memory of Water* is terrifically enjoyable. It puts you in mind of Ayckbourn, Bennett and Joe Orton; but the author is the almost unknown Shelagh Stephenson, a dramatist with a sharp eye and a gift for quirky dialogue to match. Her play impressed at its premiere in Hampstead in 1996, and does so again now, though mainly when the funnier characters are given their heads. When Stephenson attempts to deepen the situation, her touch gets less sure.

The time for the funeral approaches. Two sisters go eccentrically to pieces. The youngest and scattiest, Julia Sawalha's Catherine, bangs about in egomaniac disarray, maddening everyone else with her hypochondria, her psychological problems, her obsession with the latest of her 78 lovers. Meanwhile the oldest, Teresa, moves first into martyr mode and then, sensing that her self-sacrifices have not made the others feel guilty enough, spectacularly hits the bottle. Need I say that Alison Steadman rises splendidly to the comic occasion?

But tragi-comedy, especially tragi-comedy with intellectual pretensions, is a challenging genre; and you become increasingly aware that, while Teresa, Catherine and Frank exist primarily to provoke laughter, you are meant to care about the second sister, Samantha Bond's cool, incisive Mary. She is the family high-flyer, a 39-year-old doctor with a married lover, a longing for a child and an agonising secret in her past. She also has some emotionally loaded scenes with Margot Leicester as the ghost of the mother who loved and resented her.

It's weighty stuff, and so, in a different way, is Stephenson's theme, which is the nature, the importance and the self-serving subjectivity of memory. But isn't there something self-conscious about her mentions of Alzheimer's disease and homeopathic theory and her attempts to relate them to sisterly arguments about Mum and the past? Similarly, isn't there something troubling about a play which treats family politics with great intelligence, yet takes one of its victims more seriously than the others? Yes; but take comfort. You will probably be laughing too much at Stephenson's inventive dialogue and Terry Johnson's pacy production to worry.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE



Such devoted sisters: Julia Sawalha, Alison Steadman and Samantha Bond as the three siblings in Shelagh Stephenson's tragi-comic play, *The Memory of Water*

Demented feats of funny clay



Do the hands of the divine mould man's nature, or do the mortal forces that surround him? In Joseph Nadj's free adaptation of Büchner's *Woyzeck*, opening the London International Mime Festival, malleable clay becomes the stuff of human matter; it is smeared across faces to create a deathly grey complexion, it is moulded into little figures and felt affectionately; at the apex of the violent and demented action a full-sized human bust of minutely lifelike detail has its entire face sliced off and crushed. The human beings, in their turn, are treated like some kind of cheap raw material to be pressed into shape at the hands of the military authorities.

Nadj has dispensed altogether with Büchner's text, exploring the themes of obsession and repression through fluid ensemble mime. The physical invention is breathtaking: at one point a soldier is "created" from scratch; a full-sized man thrown about in a blanket as if he were nothing but a strange-shaped rag and then inserted into a uniform nailed to a door. The constant threat of destruction overshadows the action; one character is decorated with a pair of nooses, knives are thrown about and apples and eggs crushed into pulp. When Woyzeck does eventually submit to his violent impulses, they are taken to cannibalistic extremes; the destruction of those around him being destruction of the self; whereon he begins to eat himself.

There are great moments of humour among the madness, including a surreal cycle race in which the competitors have to carry their vehicles around in order to overtake one another. The detailing is meticulous and understated; one character has a raining hat, another two real birds in a cage, another produces whole eggs from thin air. Such little elements of magic take place almost incidentally; indeed the action on the stage is so rich that much passes by unnoticed.

At the level of performance and choreography, this is silent theatre at its physically demanding best. The disturbing claustrophobia established on the shabby little stage is equal to anything attempted in the effects-rich world of cinema, and the overshadowing sense of wrongness is even more impressive for being largely unattached to any notion of plot or linear action. It seems a shame that the subject-matter is so esoteric, since this talented company is unlikely to convert any mimephobics to the cause.

However, those prepared to leap into the textless void are likely be haunted by Nadj's horrible vision long after the demented action has finished.

HETTIE JUDAH

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament

SHERIDAN SMITH

Age: 17.

Profession: "All-round entertainer," to quote her CV.

Where can she be seen? At the Donmar Warehouse for another five weeks in the revival of the 1987 Stephen Sondheim-James Lapine musical *Into the Woods*. As directed by John Crowley, Smith puts a delightfully blunt and impish Yorkshire spin on the character of Little Red Riding Hood, even if not a few American tourists have mistaken her North of England accent for Cockney.

A Yorkshire Red Riding Hood? And why not? At the auditions, recalls the Doncaster native, "there was never any sense of 'You have got to do it this way.' It felt a bit strange doing the part in a posh accent, so I said, 'Would you mind me just trying it out in my own voice?' They said, 'You do it however you feel best,' and then when I actually got the part, I just kept on with it."

Was it a taxing role? "I found that she was quite a lot like me, actually. Riding Hood comes across all sweet and innocent, when actually she's just this cheeky little thing who speaks her mind and eats a lot — which is a lot like me."

Does she come naturally by her talents? Sounds that way: *Smith's parents are country-and-western performers, and her* 23-year-old brother is into Oasis and has his own band. The family has encouraged her through four years with the National Youth Music Theatre: three separate engagements playing the title role in *Annie*, and a West End run as Talhulah in *Bugsy Malone*: "Mum and Dad have never pushed me to do anything. They always say, 'Are you still happy?' If I ever said no I'm not, they'd come and get me and take me home."



So is she happy? Most definitely — "this is really exciting, the biggest thing I've ever done" — notwithstanding the seasonal perils of flu. "We've got all the medicines," Smith says of the show's distaff players, who share a dressing room. "It's just that time of year; touch wood, I've not been too bad."

MATT WOLF

OPERA: **Rodney Milnes** struggles with a pair of musical curiosities

Lurve in a cold climate

A curious evening. Vanessa, Samuel Barber's grand romantic opera, was given a slap-up premiere at the New York Met in 1958, with the leading singers of the day in decor by Cecil Beaton, and has occasionally been revived. The first British performance was given on Monday by the Other *Theatre Company in the Studio* Theatre at the Lyric Hammersmith; a reduced orchestration had been promised, but in the event the performance was accompanied by piano only and a (justifiably) defensive programme note about "workshop" conditions in preparation for a full-scale production. We have been warned.

Vanessa needs all the help it can get. Gian Carlo Menotti's libretto deals with "lurve" rather than love, in syntax that might bring a blush even to the cheek of Dame Barbara Cartland. The Scandinavian aristocrat of the title has been waiting in her Nordic fastness for the return of her Lost Love for 20 years: he, or rather the Lost Love's son, turns up, instantly seduces Vanessa's niece Erika, but eventually goes off with Vanessa to start life afresh in their new mansion in Paris (delete Cartland, insert Daisy Ashford). At curtain-fall, Erika is left waiting. The characters, like those in certain plays by Rattigan and Coward, or indeed Poulenc's *Voix humaine*, make sense only if you acknowledge that they are all men.

Barber's score is unashamedly, efficiently neo-romantic: conventional arias, duets and dance scenes, with a fine quintet to round the evening off. Much of it is very beautiful. But in the context of earlier American operas like *Porgy and Bess* and *Street Scene*, not to mention what was happening in Europe (*Billy Budd* was already seven years old), it is in a time-warp, already a historical curiosity.

And, quite apart from the absence of an orchestra, it received no help whatsoever. Healthy operatic voices made no concession to the tiny space — the sound level was *ear-splitting* — and the action was virtually undirected: characterisation, motivation even at this Mills and Boon level, were fatally ill-defined. The title role was cruelly miscast, and only *the excellent mezzo Louise Mott (Erika)* and the experienced Richard Angas (the would-be Chekhovian Doctor) emerged unscathed.



Ear-splitting: Meryl Richardson (Vanessa) and Evan Bowers (Anatol)

A brave effort, or irresponsibly foolhardy? Either way, I'm not sure this should ever have been out before a paying public.

There's no getting away from it: **The Golden Cockerel** is a profoundly mysterious work. Why did the tsarist authorities react so violently to this fairytale fantasy, dangerous only in its own over-lengthy inconsequentiality, and subversive only to the most paranoid of censors? Why did Rimsky set it? Is it just the sensational success of Diaghilev's danced version, seen in London in 1914, that has given it the tag of Rimsky's best opera? (It isn't.) What on *earth* is it about?

Oh, the hell with it, lie back and enjoy the music, which is all Sadler's Wells audiences can do with any profit when faced with the Royal Opera's staging. *Tim Hopkins's scatter-shot production,* hurling out images as varied as the Winter Palace-as-hospital and Boris Yeltsin as pop star in the hope that some will hit the mark, is little help: it's an evening for do-it-yourself decoders, if they can be bothered when the grey-box set offers little visual enchantment and the action is so innocent of fantasy, so joyless, with scarcely a laugh all evening. The language barrier is virtually insuperable: reading jokes on supertitles is not the same as hearing and watching them being delivered.

But with Gennady Rozhdestvensky at his most genial back in the pit after the illness that prevented him conducting the first night, the purely musical rewards were substantial last Thursday: he loves this music, never hurries it, relishes Rimsky's near-parodistic "exotic" colouring, caresses the chamber-music delicacy of the instrumentation. The ROH Orchestra played beautifully for him.

And the alternate cast boasted some excellent singers, trying desperately to communicate with a numbed audience. *Darina Takova's Queen of Shemakha* was no mechanical nightingale: she has a really meaty, neo-spinto soprano with sufficient agility to skitter about above the stave — lovely. Vladimir Matorin (Dodon) both fields characteristically Russian, polished-granite bass sound and has delightfully mobile features: he came nearest to getting some of the comedy across. His colleague from the Bolshoi, Mikhail Agafonov, negotiated the Astrologer's high notes fearlessly, not always beautifully, but certainly authentically. Anne Dawson (Cockerel), Gillian Knight (Amelfa) and Timothy Robinson (Guidon) sang strongly but were largely defeated by the staging. Thank heavens for Rozhdestvensky.

Several kisses short of a ball

DANCE

Cinderella
Coliseum

Every classical ballet company worth its salt needs a ballet like Michael Corder's *Cinderella*. His award-winning setting of the Prokofiev score is well stocked with fine classical writing, elegant and exhilarating choreography that penetrates deep within the corps and brings a regal sheen to the entire company.

Corder's production, created for English National Ballet in 1996, owes its allegiance to 19th-century Russia and, unlike Ashton's for the Royal Ballet, *nothing to English pantomime*. He frames the stage with shimmering ensemble work and he isn't afraid of thinking big in his set pieces: Cinderella's entrance to the ball is magnificent, the Act II pas de deux grandly declarative, and Act III's moonlit finale majestic.

For the soloists, the choreography wears its emotions lightly but clearly. Cinderella's sadness is held in long melancholic phrases, while her fantasies are evinced in dances of felicity and grace. The Stepsisters move with staccato fire, pointedly devoid of charm.

The downside to Corder's production, now revived for ENB's winter season in London, is that it exposes weaknesses in the company's ranks, and on Monday night these were considerable (although flu necessitated some hasty re-*arranging of casting*). They were most evident in the four couples who make up the Fairies and their Cavaliers. Corder's writing for them is tricky — and proved too much.

The leading couple, visitors from the Boston Ballet, also disappointed. Larissa Ponomarenko, trained in Russia, has the technical equipment necessary for Corder's heroine. She is a lovely stylist, allowing one phrase to melt into another most attractively. And her trapped butterfly of a Cinderella skims the stage in wonderfully fleet bourrées as she tries to find small delights in her life of drudgery.

For someone who spends so much time cooking and cleaning she is surprisingly gracious, a princess in waiting. Yet when she meets her Prince nothing happens. Remote and self-absorbed, her Cinderella could barely bring herself to look at the Frenchman Patrick Armand on Monday, and if they were radiating interpersonal warmth on stage it certainly didn't reach the stalls.

Armand, for his part, looked like a Prince with a lot on his mind. He rushed on to the stage in the ballroom scene already tense and bad-tempered. Yes, he has great finesse and strength as a dancer, but his demeanour was so grim that one wondered what he was doing at this party. Seeing Cinderella didn't improve his spirits either, and his Gallic hauteur never left him.

ENB soloists Simone Clarke and Elisabeth Miegge did the home team proud with their double act as the sniggering, mean-spirited Stepsisters who take great pleasure in taunting Cinders. The music was another plus. Patrick Flynn conducted Prokofiev's opulent score, encouraging ENB's Orchestra on to an impressive display of lushness and grandeur.

DEBRA CRAINE

■ **LISTINGS**

Bartoli in Birmingham

ARTS

■ **TOMORROW**

All the new films reviewed

RECOMMENDED TODAY

Guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Marit Hargie

LONDON

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: The great cellist Mstislav Rostropovich joins the LSO as soloist in the UK premiere of Sofia Gubaidulina's The Canticle of the Sun, Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations and Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto No 1. Ryusuke Numajiri conducts.
Barbican (0171-638 8891). Tonight, 7.30pm.

I WEEP AT MY PIANO: Told By An Idiot regulars Hayley Carmichael, Richard Clews and Stephen Harper play Lorca, Dali and Buñuel in a hallucinatory evocation of Lorca's last hours. Paul Hunter directs.
BAC (0171-223 2223). Opens tonight, 8pm.



Mstislav Rostropovich plays at the Barbican

SCHUMANN RECITAL: The Finnish soprano Soile Isokoski sings Schumann's Frauenliebe und -leben followed by songs by Strauss, Bernstein and Kuula.
Wigmore Hall (0171-935 2141). Tonight, 7.30pm.

POULENC FESTIVAL: The Royal Academy of Music celebrates the French composer's centenary with a concert of five of his works. Among the evening's soloists are the award-winning soprano Emma Bell and baritone Christopher Maltman.
Royal Academy of Music (0171-935 5461). Tonight, 7.30pm.

ELSEWHERE

BIRMINGHAM: Continuing its 25th anniversary season the Academy of Ancient Music arrives here with a concert performance of the 1711 version of Handel's opera Rinaldo. Cecilia Bartoli, Ewa Podles and Gerald Finley head an international cast. Christopher Hogwood conducts.
Symphony Hall (0121-212 3333).

LIVERPOOL: Petr Altrichter conducts the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in a performance of Beethoven's groundbreaking Fifth Symphony prefaced by Haydn and Shostakovich.
Philharmonic Hall (0151-709 3789). Tonight, 7.30pm.

MANCHESTER: The acclaimed pianist Nikolai Demidenko joins the Hallé Orchestra to play Grieg's Piano Concerto. This is framed by works by Sibelius and Vaughan Williams.
Bridgewater Hall (0161-907 9000). 7.30pm.

NEW WEST END SHOWS

Jeremy Kingston's choice of theatre showing in London
■ House full, returns only ◪ Some seats available □ Seats at all prices

◪ **ALEGRIA:** The breathtakingly exotic Cirque du Soleil returns to London for the fourth successive year with further prodigious feats of contortions, lethal-looking trapeze acts, fire-eating and clowning.
Albert Hall (0171-589 8212)

PERFECT DAYS: Siobhan Redmond's award-winning performance as the thirtysomething celebrity hairdresser longing for a baby. John Tiffany directs Liz Lochhead's poignant comedy.
Hampstead (0171-722 9301)

□ **THE COLOUR OF JUSTICE:** Dramatised reconstruction of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. Timed to coincide with this month's publication of the findings.
Tricycle Theatre (0171-328 1000)

□ **KRAPP'S LAST TAPE:** Edward Petherbridge's touring performance as Beckett's ancient sensualist replaying lost time. Also the rarely performed Breath — total playing time: 35 seconds.
Arts Theatre (0171-836 3334)

◪ **THE MEMORY OF WATER:** Alison Steadman, Samantha Bond and Julia Sawalha star in Shelagh Stephenson's acclaimed drama of family memories. Terry Johnson directs.
Vaudeville (0171-836 9987)

□ **CHICAGO:** Maria Friedman injects new blood into the hit revival of Kander and Ebb's musical about murder and fickle fame.
Adelphi (0171-344 0055)

□ **JESUS MY BOY:** Tom Conti in John Dowie's fitfully amusing comedy giving Joseph's side of the story.
Apollo (0171-494 5070).

◪ **PETER PAN:** Justin Salinger plays the title role, with David Troughton as Captain Hook, in return of Fiona Laird's enjoyable production.
Olivier (0171-452 3000).

◪ **INTO THE WOODS:** Sondheim's nightmarish take on favourite fairy tales. John Crowley directs the winter musical.
Donmar (0171-369 1732)

FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE

James Christopher's choice of the latest movies

NEW RELEASES

LITTLE VOICE (15): Mark Herman's wonderful version of Jim Cartwright's stage hit. Jane Horrocks sings glorious covers of torch song divas. Michael Caine, Ewan McGregor, Brenda Blethyn and Jim Broadbent sleaze around in the foreground.

THE SIEGE (15): Denzel Washington, Annette Bening, and Bruce Willis trip over each others' bootlaces as they try to defuse an Arab terrorist offensive in Manhattan. Chillingly real, beautifully acted. Director Edward Zwick fingers a real raw nerve.

PSYCHO (15): Hopeless remake of Hitchcock's original. Gus Van Sant re-shoots this classic fear movie in colour, misses the ironies and misplaces the shuddering suspense. With Vince Vaughn and Anne Heche doing their worst to replace Anthony Perkins and Janet Leigh.

π (PI) (15): Low-budget sci-fi adventure by David Aronofsky that charts the madness of a genius mathematician who is haunted by nightmares and money-mad investors. Sean Gullette is the mesmerising lead.

ANGEL DUST (ICA): Cool, classy Japanese melodrama about a psychic detective who has to nail her former lover and mentor for killings on the Tokyo tube. Sogo Ishii directs a compelling psychodrama that ultimately has too many twists.

TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT (PG): A reassuringly scratchy reprint of Howard Hawks's 1944 classic in which Lauren Bacall shoots fish in a barrel and Humphrey Bogart falls madly in love.

CURRENT

THE ACID HOUSE (18): Three darkly comic tales of drugs, drink and hallucination by Irvine Welsh. An indigestible onslaught. With Stephen McCole, Ewen Bremner, and Kevin McKidd.

SITCOM (18): A French bourgeois family unbuttons itself. Mildly diverting lampoon, excellently acted ensemble cast. Director, François Ozon.

STAR TREK: INSURRECTION (PG): Patrick Stewart's Enterprise crew come to the rescue of a peaceable race who have found the elixir of youth. Lightly likeable. Director, Jonathan Frakes.

ENEMY OF THE STATE (15): Will Smith's lawyer tumbles upon a political conspiracy. Exciting, fast-paced thriller, with Gene Hackman and Jon Voight.

WHAT DREAMS MAY COME (15): Robin Williams wades through the afterlife trying to find his loved ones. Technically dazzling, but sabotaged by a woolly script. With Annabella Sciorra, Cuba Gooding Jr, Max Von Sydow. Director, Vincent Ward.



Not the Big Apple's finest hour: 42nd Street as it was in 1987 before the big clean-up — a sleazy row of porn cinemas and peep-shows, with hard drugs being sold openly on the street

Miracle on 42nd Street

New York's seediest block has been reborn as the heart of theatreland. Benedict Nightingale reports

Some 15 years ago I walked with a New York drama critic through what had been the heart of America's theatreland, the section of 42nd Street that links 7th and 8th Avenues. "It's worse than Calcutta," he said. If anything, he understated. No amputees were begging for rupees; but there were homeless people pushing shopping carts crammed with bric-à-brac, drug peddlers in hoods whispering "smoke? smoke?", prostitutes, porn shops, peep-shows, seedy cinemas offering XXX-rated movies, and no doubt crack houses behind the sleaze and stink.

But imagine Calcutta transformed into downtown Sydney or Cardboard City into an urban Olympus comprising the best of Piccadilly, Shaftesbury Avenue and Covent Garden. Within the past three years 42nd Street has been reinvented, acquiring three renovated theatres in the process, including the most beautiful I have ever seen. And by 2002 — when more playhouses, no fewer than 39 new cinema screens, restaurants, and a branch of Madame Tussaud's will be active — New York's old, decaying heart will have had a transplant.

Back in the 1890s and early 1900s this was where the big fashionable theatres were built — 12 in all. Here, New Yorkers saw musicals by Gershwin, Porter and Berlin, W.C. Fields, Tallulah Bankhead, Bea Lillie, Gertie Lawrence and Mary Pickford, John Barrymore's celebrated Hamlet, Coward and Olivier in the American premiere of *Private Lives*. Before the stock market crash, and occasionally even after, 42nd Street (and this block in particular) was more the Great White Way than Broadway itself.

But in the 1920s and 1930s the theatres north of 42nd Street grew in number and importance, and those that survived on the street dwindled first into burlesque houses, then into tacky cinemas. In the late 1970s the city fathers committed themselves to redeveloping the block, but the only visible result was yet more decline. "There were studies and plans, and studies of plans, but nothing happened," says Cora Cahan, president of New 42nd Street, the non-profit organisation that was eventually asked to oversee the regeneration of the block, and specifically of its disused theatres.

That was in 1990, by when the street was, in Cahan's words, "a black hole, the belly of the beast, the saddest place in Manhattan". Its public telephones were in effect offices for drug-dealers. People walking to New York's bus terminal at 42nd and 8th often made detours down 41st or 43rd Street because the obvious route was so crime-ridden. Cahan has seen undercover cops pulling guns on the block, and once had to take cover when gangs started a shoot-out.



JUSTIN SUTCLIFFE

Today, Disney and others have revitalised the historic theatres with family entertainment

New 42nd Street's board decided it did not wish to transform the strip into a spurious Champs-Elysées, still less a pedestrian precinct or mall. It would remain a main artery, teeming with cars, but with its old grace and glitz restored.

But how to accomplish this, given problems that ranged from endless lawsuits by landowners fighting slum-clearance orders to the arrival of a Republican Mayor with a strong belief in market forces? The first key decision was to use much of the money allocated by the previous administration on renovating one smallish theatre, the New Victory.

So in 1995, before the porn shops had closed, the builders removed their fences to reveal an edifice that had cynical New Yorkers pressing their noses against its glass doors in disbelief. There, complete with the gorgeous double-staircase entrance removed 60 years earlier, was a theatre specialising in work for young people and offering tickets as cheap as $6 for visiting shows that recently included our own Young Vic's *Grimm Tales*. Then came a second, even more crucial event. The Disney Organisation decided it needed its own New York theatre, and agreed to spend $35 million renovating the New Amsterdam on the south of 42nd Street.

Cahan remembers her trips to the derelict theatre with Disney's top brass. The roof was open to the rain. Fungi grew in the stalls. Falls of plaster had turned the stairs into a ski-slope incongruously topped by a dead pigeon. On one freezing day stalactites drooped from a chandelier. All that was lacking to complete a dismal picture was the ghost of the suicidal Ziegfeld girl who haunts the New Amsterdam's roof and was once seen by a security guard gliding through a window on to 42nd Street.

But Disney went ahead, and two years later was presenting *The Lion King* in a theatre that might have been decorated by Della Robbia and Burne-Jones. Everywhere there is a mural, some Art Nouveau glass, or a carving in plaster, marble, timber or porcelain to enjoy. Look up, and there are wonderfully sculpted nymphs. Wander about and you find a huge baronial fireplace behind the stalls, paintings of historic New York in the crypt-like smoking room, friezes evoking Wagner and Shakespeare, the Victory of Art over Falsehood and a myriad other panels. If you think of Disney only in terms of cute toy bugs, funny mice and smiling salespeople (and there are plenty of those in the store it has opened next door) see the New Amsterdam and think again.

At any rate its opening gave heart to developers and prospective tenants. Canada's Livent Organisation transformed the Apollo and Lyric theatres into the Ford Centre, New York's best-equipped playhouse. A leading company, the Roundabout, is to occupy the rebuilt Selwyn Theatre. A 25-screen cinema complex will soon open on the south side, and another, with 14 screens, will be part of a vast "entertainment walk" with shops, restaurants and a hotel on the north.

So it goes on. HMV is to open a store on the south, Reuters will build its new home on the north. New 42nd Street has yet to decide the future of Times Square Theatre, where *The Front Page* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* had their premieres, but is raising a ten-storey edifice containing dance and drama studios and a 200-seat theatre for Off-Broadway companies.

At night light will be played on to this building's glass front, creating the effect of a shimmering spire that will pulsate with colour. Could there be an apter symbol of the transformation of what was arguably America's grottiest city block into its most improbably exciting? I can't think of one.

مكذا من الأصل

RACING: CLASSIFICATIONS UNDERLINE LACK OF QUALITY IN SPEED AND STAMINA DIVISIONS

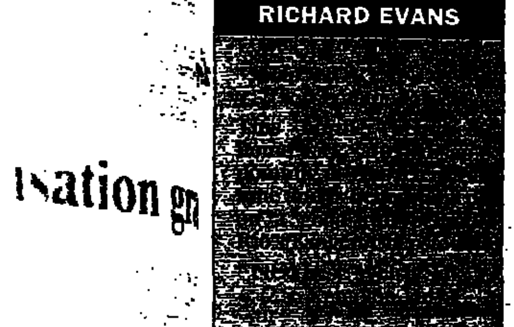
Top performers take middle ground

By Chris McGrath

THE end-of-term report on the Flat class of 1998 admonishes breeders that they could try harder in their two weakest subjects, pure speed and applied stamina. For while the International Classifications, unveiled by a panel of handicappers in London yesterday, sustains an overall strength in depth, there appears a distinct fraying at the edges.

Elnadim, so disappointing after winning the July Cup, is leading European sprinter with a rating (121) that further exacerbates the decaying standard of recent years. The average rating over the past decade is 125.7, compared with one of 129.5 for champion milers and 132.7 for the top horses over 12 furlongs.

Stayers, meanwhile, continue to be perceived as gawky and unglamorous on the bloodstock catwalk. Though the cup races once again pro-


RICHARD EVANS

duced some of the best spectacles of the entire calendar, at 120 the top stayer, Kayf Tara, could not match even the bleak ten-year average of 121.1.

Their plight is familiar. Yesterday's figures, however, confirm a corresponding dilution at the other end of the spectrum. Though there is always a pragmatic demand at the sales for sharp, precocious types, it would appear that naked speed is being treated as a slightly downmarket aspiration.

Geoffrey Gibbs, the panel chairman, said: "The speed division and, to an extent, the distance division have both become less competitive. Dayjur was the last outstanding sprinter and even he set out to be a miler and became a sprinter almost by mistake. Dick Hern himself said that he never so misjudged a horse."

Stallions command a greater commercial following over a mile. Time after time, speedy types dip their toes into classic water — Ajdal even ran in the Derby — before finding their metier as sprinters. A similar fate will befall some of those at the top of the 1998 juvenile ratings, which are headed by two colts with obvious stamina limitations.

Mujahid, a son of Danzig trained for Hamdan al-Maktoum by John Dunlop, is champion after earning a rating of 123 with his exposure of Stravinsky and company in the Dewhurst Stakes. Connections have already expressed their reservations about a mile, however, and there must be similar questions over Lujain (122). He bolted up in the Middle Park Stakes over six furlongs, but then ran a disappointing race in the Dewhurst.

With Arazi and Celtic Swing having reached a giddy 130, Mujahid may look one of the more anonymous champion juveniles. But, as Matthew Tester, the two-year-olds' handicapper, said: "The exciting thing this year is that you can go down the list and find eight or so horses that wouldn't surprise you if they were to win a Guineas. The Dewhurst didn't settle the issue. Whereas last year you could be reasonably confident that Xaar would win the Guineas if he ran up to his Dewhurst form (127), this time the game is up for grabs.

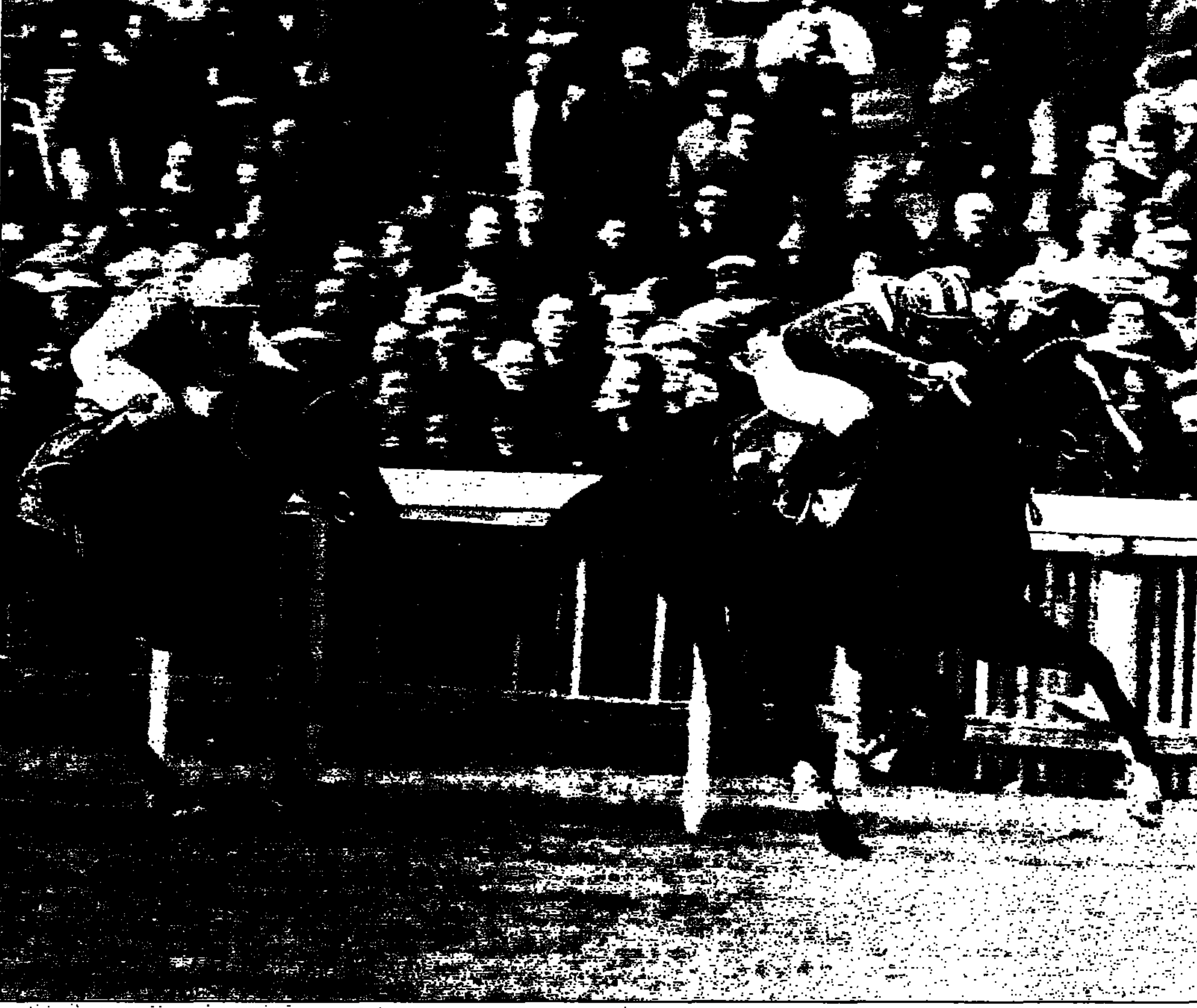
"For Lujain, it was probably a race too far. Few genuine milers show that much speed. That's not to say he won't win a group one over a mile, but his inherent speed would be the weapon that enables him to do that."

A marked feature among the juveniles is the poor showing of the French, matched for the first time by the improved Irish. Even among their seniors, the unbeaten Arc winner, Sagamix, could not rival his contemporaries, Desert Prince (128), Dr Fong and High-Rise (127). At 126, he compares pretty mortally to the previous Arc winner, Peintre Celebre (136).

Godolphin's marvellous year dominates the Classifications. Among 28 representatives, it can celebrate the overall European champion, Intikhab, who managed a rating of 130 despite the injury that prevented him contesting a group one race. He is rated 1lb ahead of his superbly brave and versatile stablemate, Swain, whose second King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Diamond Stakes win is considered 2lb better than his noble efforts in Dubai and the United States.

On dirt, he rubbed shoulders with some outstanding American older horses, including the Classifications' top performer in Skip Away (131), Awesome Again (130) and Swain's old foe, Silver Charm (128).

JULIAN HERBERT/ALLSPORT


Mujahid heads the two-year-old classification after his fine victory over Auction House in the Dewhurst Stakes at Newmarket in October

LEADING TWO-YEAR-OLDS OF 1998

MUJAHID (J Dunlop)	123	Won Dewhurst Stakes
LUJAIN (D Loder)	122	Won Middle Park Stakes
ALJABR (Saeed Bin Suroor)	119	Won Prix de la Salamandre
AUCTION HOUSE (B Hills)	119	2nd Dewhurst Stakes
ORPEN (A O'Brien)	119	Won Prix Morny
WAY OF LIGHT (P Bary)	119	Won Grand Criterium
COMMANDER COLLINS (P Chapple-Hyam)	118	Won Racing Post Trophy
STRAVINSKY (A O'Brien)	118	2nd Prix de la Salamandre
BLACK AMBER (N Callaghan)	117	Won Prix Robert Papin
ENRIQUE (H Cecil)	117	4th Dewhurst Stakes
BINT ALLAYL (M Channon)	116	Won Lowther Stakes
EXEAT (J Gosden)	115	2nd Prix Morny
JOSR ALGARHOUD (M Channon)	115	Won Gimcrack Stakes
RED SEA (P Cole)	115	2nd Grand Criterium
SPADOUN (C Laffon-Parias)	115	Won Criterium de Saint-Cloud

HOW THE TOP JUVENILES FARED AT THREE

1998	MUJAHID	123	?
1997	XAAR	127	No group one wins
1996	REVOQUE	123	No group one wins
1995	ALHAARTH	126	No group one wins
1994	CELTIC SWING	130	French Derby
1993	GRAND LODGE	120	St James's Palace Stakes
1992	ZAFONIC	125	2,000 Guineas
1991	ARAZI	130	No group one wins
1990	HECTOR PROTECTOR	126	French 2,000 Guineas, Prix Jacques le Marois
1989	MACHIAVELLIAN	125	No group one wins
1988	HIGH ESTATE	125	No group one wins
1987	RAVINELLA	125	1,000 Guineas, French 1,000 Guineas
	WARNING	125	Sussex Stakes, Queen Elizabeth II Stakes
1986	REFERENCE POINT	127	Derby, King George, St Leger

Gifford rallies to Hide's defence

By Chris McGrath

NOBODY was going to look that good, matched against Tony McCoy at his most indomitable on Eudipe, but there were undoubtedly those at Sandown on Saturday who considered Philip Hide particularly embarrassed by the contrast to his riding of Glitter Isle in the Mildmay-Cazalet Chase. Hide appeared to have matters under control from some way out, but Glitter Isle lost vital momentum at the last fence, allowing McCoy to drive Eudipe past on the hill.

Yesterday, Josh Gifford mounted an indignant defence of Hide, who lost his post as stable jockey at Findon last April, but still rides many of the trainer's horses. "People are quick to have a go, but they only notice what happens in the closing stages," Gifford said.

"What happens in the country is also important and Philip had the horse jumping like a buck. Did anybody notice that? If our horse had been able to come from behind, you might have seen a different result. He went to the last with the race won, but he stopped and popped and the other horse landed running."

Gifford matched words with deeds, confirming that Hide would ride Mandys Mantino in the Victor Chandler Chase at Ascot on Saturday. Ridden as usual by Hide, Mandys Mantino ran a fine third to Direct Route in the Tingle Creek Chase at Sandown last month. "I do think he's harshly handicapped," Gifford said. "But he's very well."

Though Edredon Bleu may miss the race on account of the softening ground, there remain plenty of well-fancied obstructions, notably Get Real (3-1 from 7-2 yesterday) and Monnaie Forte (6-1 from 9-1).

Teeton Mill, brilliant winner of the King George VI Chase, will warm up for the Tote Cheltenham Gold Cup over the undulations of the Cotswold course itself, in the Pillar Chase on January 30, rather than the Peter Marsh at Haydock on Saturday week.

Venetia Williams also confirmed that the Martell Grand National remains an option for Teeton Mill.

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

Lingfield Park

Going: standard

.00 (1m 5f) 1, **Prince Danzig** (J P Spencer, 4-1); 2, Mystagogue (evens fav); 3, Winged Greybird (50-1). 8 ran. Nk, 15l. D Murray Smith (Upper Lambourn). Tote: £5.70; £2.00, £1.00, £25.10. DF: £3.60. CSF: £7.77.

.30 (7f) 1, **Glastonbury** (T Sprake, 4-1 fav); 2, Riddle (10-1); 3, Annie Apple (5-1). 11 ran. NR: Zola Power. 3l, 2½l. P Howling (Godalming). Tote: £5.40; £1.90, £5.40, £1.30. DF: £32.20. CSF: £42.04. There was no bid for the winner.

.00 (5f) 1, **Tear White** (Lisa Hackett, 7-1); 2, Classy Cleo (15-2); 3, Soaked (6-4 fav). 8 ran. Nk, 1½l. T Mills (Epsom). Tote: £6.30; £1.30, £2.30, £1.00. DF: £12.00. CSF: £23.53. Tricast: £41.17.

.30 (1m) 1, **Love Diamonds** (Dean McKeown, 6-4 fav); 2, Malchik (7-1); 3, Paddock Inspection (10-1). 6 ran. 8l, 1l. M Johnston (Middleham). Tote: £2.50; £1.20, £1.60. DF: £5.50. CSF: £11.19.

.00 (1m) 1, **Mawkab** (P Fredericks, 9-1); 2, Woolly Winsome (10-1); 3, Grand Coronet (14-1). Oudalmuteena 4-1 fav. 11 ran. 3l, 1¼l. Miss Gay Kelleway (Lingfield). Tote: £22.50; £2.00, £1.80, £2.00. DF: £40.60. CSF: £313.83.

.30 (1m 2f) 1, **Philistar** (P Dobbs, 10-1); 2, Key To The City (14-1); 3, Kings Arrow (2). Hawksbill Henry (4th) 9-4 fav. 9 ran. 3l, ½l. K Burke (Wantage). Tote: £12.60; £1.80, £3.40, £1.10. DF: £39.20. Tote Trifecta: £801.00. CSF: £134.70. Tricast: £345.15.

Jackpot: £19,451.00.

Placepot: £63.60.

Quadpot: £27.10.

Sedgefield called off, Wetherby to inspect

By Our Racing Staff

THE Sedgefield meeting scheduled for today is the latest casualty of the current cold snap with frost and snow combining to force the abandonment of the card at an inspection yesterday afternoon.

A spokeswoman for Sedgefield said: "There is frost and snow on the track. It is thawing but there is a hard frost forecast."

Kempton Park expects to get the National Hunt show back on the road today, but tomorrow's fixture at Wetherby is reportedly "in the balance" with a 3pm inspection called for today.

A spokesman for the course, where the high-class hurdler, Princeful, is set to make his chasing debut, said yesterday: "It depends what weather we get tonight.

"We have still got snow and frost on the course but the forecast says it will clear.

"It is a question of whether it clears in time. The forecast is encouraging but at the moment the meeting is in the balance."

Hopes are high, however, for tomorrow's meeting at Wincanton.

A course spokeswoman said: "We're very confident. At the moment there are no problems and we would have been able to race today."

Musselburgh officials have their "fingers crossed" for Friday's meeting. "We still have some frost in the ground and frost is forecast for tonight and Wednesday.

However, it is forecast to become milder from Thursday night. We are keeping our fingers crossed," a course spokesman said. The going is described as good, good to soft in places.

Yesterday was a blank day for jump racing, with the meetings at Leicester and Newcastle both abandoned. Only the all-weather Flat meeting at Lingfield Park survived.

Meanwhile, there have been encouraging bulletins on former jockeys-turned-trainers, Paul Kelleway and Tommy Stack.

Kelleway, 58, now retired, is reported to have won the first round in his battle against pancreatic cancer.

His daughter, Gay, said yesterday: "The doctors at Cromwell Hospital in London say that they have contained the cancer and you can't believe how relieved the family is. He has lost a great deal of weight but will soon be off to a rehabilitation clinic in Switzerland."

Stack, 53, taken ill with meningitis last month, has regained consciousness.

WOLVERHAMPTON

THUNDERER

1.00 Doberman. 1.30 Pride Of Brixton. 2.00 Ice Age. 2.35 Muddy Water. 3.05 White Plains. 3.40 Burning. 4.10 Sudest.

GOING: STANDARD DRAW: NO ADVANTAGE SIS

1.00 BASIL SELLING STAKES

(Div I: £1,489: 1m 100yd) (8 runners)

1 (1) 20-1 ROFFEY SPINNEY 7 (C,F,S) J Cullinan 5-9-5 B Smith (7) [illegible]
2 (6) 00-5 ATTARIKH 8 Mrs A King 6-9-0 S Righton (7) 57
3 (2) 00-5 DOBERMAN 4 (B) B Meehan 4-9-0 R Perham 78
4 (4) 000- FUTURE PROSPECT 26 (CD,F,S) M A Buckley 5-9-0 R FitzPatrick (5) 82
5 (8) 105- NUIT D'OR 12J (CD) W G M Turner 4-9-0 M Tebbutt 77
6 (5) 00-6 TWO ON THE BRIDGE 7 J Given 5-9-0 A Culhane 68
7 (3) 00-2 MONCHANIA 7 (CD) J Spearing 4-8-9 Dane O'Neill 57
8 (7) 50-0 SING FOR ME 9 (C) R Hollinshead 4-8-9 P M Quinn (7) 80

2-1 Roffey Spinney, 3-1 Monchania, 4-1 Future Prospect, 6-1 Nuit D'Or, 8-1 others.

1.30 COGNAC HANDICAP (£2,775: 5f) (12)

1 (9) 110- PRIDE OF BRIXTON 25 (CD) P Evans 6-10-0 C Cogan (7) 76
2 (6) 12-0 ALJAZ 5 (CD,S) Miss G Kelleway 9-9-12 W Ryan 77
3 (10) 40-0 MAITEAMIA 5 (B,D,G,S) S Bowring 6-9-9 C Teague (3) 89
4 (4) 005- SELKIRK ROSE 93 (D,G) J Given 4-9-5 A Culhane 50
5 (12) 02-0 VILLAGE NATIVE 11 (B,CD,S) K C-Brown 6-9-3 R Price 83
6 (11) 60-0 FEATHERSTONE LANE 4 (CD,F) Miss L Siddall 8-9-2 Dean McKeown 85
7 (8) 503- SHARP HINT 61 D Nicholls 4-8-6 F Norton 89
8 (5) 54-4 TINKER'S SURPRISE 4 (B,D) J Balding 5-8-2 J Edmunds 90
9 (3) 03-2 SOTONIAN 4 (CD) P Felgate 6-8-1 S Righton (7) [illegible]
10 (1) 84-0 GENERAL EQUATION 4 (B,CD) J Balding 6-7-10 N Carlisle 79
11 (7) 03-0 NOBLE PATRIOT 4 R Hollinshead 4-7-10 P M Quinn (7) 83
12 (2) 5-00 DYCE 4 (B,CD) J Balding 5-7-10 J Quinn 73

7-2 Sotonian, 11-2 Tinker's Surprise, 6-1 Aljaz, 13-2 Pride Of Brixton, 7-1 Sharp Hint, 8-1 Maiteamia, 10-1 Village Native, Noble Patriot, 14-1 others.

2.00 CHINA CLAIMING STAKES (£2,107: 6f) (4)

1 (4) 04-1 SUE ME 5 (D,F,S) D Nicholls 7-10-0 P Clarke (7) 76
2 (1) 20-3 POLAR MIST 5 (V,CD) Mrs N Macauley 4-9-10 Dean McKeown 67
3 (2) 410- ICE AGE 161 (B,D,F) R Williams 5-9-7 J Quinn [illegible]
4 (3) 00-0 BACKHANDER 7 (H) M Wane 7-9-4 Nicola Wright (7) 60

11-8 Sue Me, 2-1 Polar Mist, 5-2 Ice Age, 16-1 Backhander.

COURSE SPECIALISTS

TRAINERS: R Charlton, 8 winners from 26 runners, 30.8%; M Prescott, 25 from 111, 22.5%; J Pearce, 18 from 91, 19.8%; M Johnston, 44 from 235, 18.7%; P Felgate, 7 from 41, 17.1%. JOCKEYS: C Nutter, 3 winners from 14 rides, 21.4%; W Ryan, 12 from 67, 17.9%; G Faulkner, 10 from 62, 16.1%; D Sweeney, 16 from 112, 14.3%; A Polli, 3 from 22, 13.6%.

2.35 MALIBU MAIDEN STAKES

(3-Y-O: £2,879: 6f) (12)

1 (1) 00- ABLE PETE 83 D Cosgrove 9-0 T Williams 48
2 (10) 002- AVENGING ANGEL 39 N Littmoden 8-9 T Sprake 45
3 (12) 0- BREEZY MELODY 53 B McMahon 8-9 V Halliday 19
4 (11) 000- ETMA ROSE 101 R Hollinshead 8-9 A Culhane 29
5 (9) 0- HATHNI KHOUND 26 D Marks 8-9 S Whitworth 13
6 (5) HELEN'S WEDDING J Berry 8-9 P Roberts (3) –
7 (7) 2-2 LA PIAZZA 8 (BF) W Haggas 8-9 W Ryan [illegible]
8 (4) LIVE TO TELL M Saunders 8-9 R Price –
9 (2) 06- MUDDY WATER 26 D Marks 8-9 D Sweeney 37
10 (8) 50-4 RED VENUS 2 J Berry 8-9 P Fessey 64
11 (3) 0- SLANDER 223 M Prescott 8-9 C Nutter –
12 (6) 0- THREE BAY TREES 50 M Johnston 8-9 J Fanning 40

5-2 La Piazza, 7-2 Avenging Angel, 6-1 Slander, 7-1 Red Venus, Three Bay Trees, 8-1 Helen's Wedding, 16-1 Able Pete, Muddy Water, 20-1 others.

3.05 JAFFA HANDICAP

(£6,185: 1m 1f 79yd) (10)

1 (4) 561- WEET-A-MINUTE 18 (CD,F,G) R Hollinshead 6-10-0 A Culhane 92
2 (3) 023- ITALIAN SYMPHONY 22 (V,C) P Evans 5-9-8 C Cogan (7) 96
3 (6) 52-0 WHITE PLAINS 11 (BF,D,S) K Burke 6-9-4 D Sweeney 98
4 (7) 22-3 BE WARNED 11 (V,CD,G,S) J Pearce 8-9-3 A Polli (3) 86
5 (5) 020- PAS DE MEMOIRES 32 (C) K Burke 4-9-1 Dean McKeown 88
6 (1) 02-1 JIBEREEN 11 (C,F,G,S) P Howling 7-8-12 S Whitworth 95
7 (8) 11-1 HOLY SMOKE 11 (S) J Eyre 4-8-4 C Lowther 97
8 (10) 551- DOM SHADEED 42 (C) R Charlton 4-8-2 P Doe (5) 98
9 (9) 212- MASTER CASTER 41J (BF,F) G McCourt 4-8-2 Martin Dwyer 96
10 (2) P20- MOSCOW MIST 127 S Pattling 8-7-12 J Quinn [illegible]

7-2 Holy Smoke, 6-1 Weet-A-Minute, Jibereen, 13-2 Dom Shadeed, 7-1 Italian Symphony, Master Caster, 8-1 Be Warned, 10-1 others.

3.40 BASIL SELLING STAKES

(Div II: £1,489: 1m 100yd) (8)

1 (2) 15-2 BURNING 7 (BF,CD,F) N Littmoden 7-9-5 D Sweeney [illegible]
2 (5) 000- EASTLEIGH 47 (S) R Hollinshead 10-9-0 Lisa Watson (7) 39
3 (7) 625- LANDRFUN 18 (CD) H Collingridge 4-9-0 Dean McKeown 77
4 (1) 000- SALFORD LAD 36J J Pearce 5-9-0 R Price 36
5 (8) 00-4 SHARP MONKEY 11 (V) Mrs N Macauley 4-9-0 P McCabe 73
6 (6) 00-0 AMINGTON GIRL 2 (B,D,G) P Evans 4-8-9 C Cogan (7) 67
7 (4) 0-00 CASATI 5 P Felgate 4-8-9 S Righton (7) 47
8 (3) 00-0 MADAME MAXI 11 (B,D,S) H Haynes 5-8-9 S Carson (7) 81

5-4 Burning, 9-2 Landrfun, 6-1 Sharp Monkey, Amington Girl, 10-1 Madame Maxi, 12-1 Salford Lad, 14-1 Casati, 20-1 Eastleigh.

4.10 JERICHO HANDICAP (£2,749: 1m 6f 166yd) (6)

1 (3) 00-1 SUDEST 4 (C,F) I Balding 5-10-5 (6ex) S Whitworth 62
2 (2) 04-1 WHITLEY GRANGE BOY 9 (S) J Eyre 6-10-1 (6ex) C Lowther 58
3 (4) 501- ARCTIC THUNDER 28 (CD,F,G,S) R Pattling 8-9-12 G Faulkner (3) 72
4 (6) 04-2 CHABROL 9 (F) P Eggan 5-9-9 A Polli (3) 50
5 (5) 466- PREMIER DANCE 116 (CD,F) D Haydn Jones 12-8-9 S Drowne 77
6 (1) 5-34 EVEZIO RUFO 3 (V,C,S) N Littmoden 7-7-12 R Thomas (7) [illegible]

6-4 Sudest, 7-2 Whitley Grange Boy, 4-1 Arctic Thunder, 5-1 Evezio Rufo, 10-1 Chabrol, Premier Dance.

KEMPTON PARK

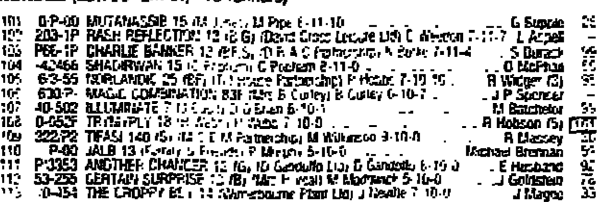
THUNDERER

1.15 Charlie Banker
1.50 Masamadas
2.20 Native Charm
2.55 Arctic Chanter
3.25 EXECUTIVE KING (nap)
4.00 Magic Circle

Timekeeper's top rating: 3.25 EXECUTIVE KING.

GOING: SOFT TOTE JACKPOT MEETING SIS

1.15 ROYAL MAIL CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS NOVICES HANDICAP HURDLE (£2,766: 2m 5f) (13 runners)



101 0-P-00 MUTANASSIB 15 [illegible] M Pipe 6-11-10 G Supple [illegible]
102 203-1P RASH REFLECTION 12 (G) [illegible] C Weedon 7-11-7 L Aspell –
103 P66-1P CHARLIE BANKER 12 (BF,S) [illegible] K Burke 7-11-4 S Durack [illegible]
104 -42466 SHADIRWAN 15 [illegible] C Popham 8-11-0 O McPhail [illegible]
105 6-3-55 NORLANDIC 25 (BF) [illegible] P Hobbs 7-10-10 R Widger (3) [illegible]
106 630-P- MAGIC COMBINATION 83F (Mrs B Curley) B Curley 6-10-7 J P Spencer –
107 40-502 ILLUMINATE 7 [illegible] 6-10-1 M Batchelor [illegible]
108 0-052F TRYMYPLY 18 [illegible] 7-10-0 R Hobson (5) [illegible]
109 322/P2 TIFASI 140 (S) [illegible] M Wilkinson 9-10-0 R Massey [illegible]
110 P-00 JALB 13 [illegible] P Murphy 5-10-0 Michael Brennan [illegible]
111 P-3353 ANOTHER CHANCER 12 (G) (D Gandolfo Ltd) D Gandolfo 6-10-0 E Husband [illegible]
112 53-255 CERTAIN SURPRISE 12 (B) [illegible] 5-10-0 J Goldstein [illegible]
113 -0-454 THE CROPPY BOY 14 [illegible] J Neville 7-10-0 J Magee 33

Long handicap: Jalb 9-13, [illegible], Another Chancer 9-9, Certain Surprise 9-8, The Croppy Boy 9-6.

BETTING: 5-1 Norlandic, [illegible] Tifasi, 7-1 Charlie Banker, 8-1 Magic Combination, 10-1 Trymyply, 12-1 Another Chancer, 14-1 others.

1998: ROYAL ARCTIC 6-10-0 C Webb (7-1) S Mellor 15 ran

FORM FOCUS Mutanassib 46l 7th of 8 to Time For Action in handicap hurdle at Taunton (2m 3f, good to soft), previously 91l 12th of 15 to The Encumbrance in [illegible] hurdle at Exeter (2m 1f, good to soft). Charlie Banker beat [illegible] in 13-runner handicap hurdle at Windsor (2m 4f, good to soft) on penultimate start. Shadirwan [illegible] of 11 to [illegible] in selling handicap hurdle at Taunton (2m 110yd, good to soft), previously [illegible]. Norlandic 20l 5th of 15 to [illegible] in novice handicap hurdle at Uttoxeter (2m 110yd, heavy), previously 20l 5th of 15 to [illegible] in novice hurdle at Chepstow (2m 4f 110yd, good to soft). Illuminate [illegible] of 9 to The Robe in novice handicap hurdle at [illegible] (2m 2f 110yd, heavy) [illegible]. Trymyply fell in novice handicap hurdle at Wincanton (2m, heavy) [illegible]. Tifasi [illegible] 2nd of 12 to [illegible] handicap hurdle at Worcester (2m 4f, good to firm). Jalb 41l 9th of 19 to Premier Generation in novice hurdle at Warwick (2m, soft) [illegible]. Another Chancer [illegible] in novice handicap hurdle at Exeter (2m 3f 110yd, heavy). Certain Surprise 38l 5th of 6 to [illegible] in selling hurdle at Fontwell (2m 2f 110yd, heavy).

TRYMYPLY, well backed when falling latest, has benefited from the overnight raising of the weights.

1.50 WALTON JUVENILE NOVICES HURDLE

(4-Y-O: £2,814: 2m) (11 runners)

201 0 DANCING DERVISH 16 [illegible] S Mellor 10-10 C Webb –
202 62 LAFFAH 12 [illegible] M Pipe 10-10 A P McCoy [illegible]
203 MASAMADAS 110F [illegible] N Henderson 10-10 M A Fitzgerald –
204 NUVELLINO 39F [illegible] P Hobbs 10-10 R Dunwoody –
205 PAGASONIC 62F [illegible] L Moore 10-10 P Hide –
206 RIVER BEAT 30F [illegible] K Burke 10-10 N Williamson –
207 SABRE BUTT 6F (B) [illegible] M Tompkins 10-10 A Maguire –
208 SCARLET PIMPERNEL 141F [illegible] N Twiston-Davies 10-10 C Llewellyn –
209 00 U K MAGIC 4 [illegible] J Jenkins 10-10 J Osborne –
210 23223 WAVE ROCK 12 [illegible] 10-10 J Culloty [illegible]
211 SATWA BOULEVARD 39F [illegible] C Mann 10-5 J Magee –

BETTING: 5-2 Wave Rock, [illegible], 9-2 Masamadas, 11-2 Laffah, 6-1 Nuvellino, 10-1 Pagasonic, 12-1 Sabre Butt, 20-1 others.

1998: ZAFARABAD 10-10 [illegible] (13-8 fav) D Nicholson 13 ran

FORM FOCUS Dancing Dervish [illegible] of 9 to New Bird in 3yo novice hurdle at Kempton (2m, soft). Laffah beaten a distance 2nd of 10 to [illegible] in 4yo novice hurdle at Exeter (2m 1f 110yd, heavy), previously [illegible] of 19 to [illegible] in 3yo novice hurdle at Warwick (2m, soft). Masamadas useful middle-distance handicapper on Flat, bought out of Chris Wall's stable for 31,000gns in October. Nuvellino fair handicapper on the Flat, showing improvement in winning 1m3f event at Nottingham in October, [illegible] out of Rod Millman's yard for 13,000gns. River Beat useful handicapper at around 9f on the Flat, [illegible] winner for Mark Tompkins last summer, [illegible] for 18,000gns in October. UK Magic beaten a distance 9th of 11 to [illegible] in 4yo novice hurdle at [illegible] (2m 110yd, soft), previously beaten a distance 9th of 12 to [illegible] in 3yo novice hurdle at Kempton (2m, good to soft). Wave Rock [illegible] of 11 to Dangerous Precedent in 4yo novice hurdle at Cheltenham (2m 1f, good to soft), previously [illegible] 2nd of 9 to [illegible] in hurdle grade 2 at Lingfield (2m 110yd, soft).

WAVE ROCK sets a reasonable standard for the newcomers to aim at and may gain a deserved success.

2.20 EASTER HERO HANDICAP CHASE

(£5,420: 2m) (6 runners)

301 -P1P14 SIERRA BAY 12 (D,F,S) (R Waters) O Sherwood 9-11-10 J Osborne 119
302 03-3F2 MORSTOCK 19 (CD,G,S) (Mrs M Fairbairn) R Hodges 9-11-7 R Dunwoody 122
303 02-F11 NATIVE CHARM 13 (D,G,S) (Pell Mell Partners) C Morlock 7-11-6 J A McCarthy 126
304 -PU441 ROBINS PRIDE 18 (D,G,S) (R Weeks) C Popham 9-11-0 A P McCoy 112
305 /21-12 BUCKLAND LAD 27 (BF,D,F,S) (Mrs R Hepburn) D Grissell 8-10-9 B Fenton 118
306 -52P43 QUANGO 18 (D,G,S) (C Nugent) C Mann 7-10-8 Mr N Fehily (7) [illegible]

BETTING: 2-1 Native Charm, 4-1 Robins Pride, 9-2 Sierra Bay, Buckland Lad, 6-1 Morstock, 10-1 Quango.

1998: MORSTOCK 8-10-8 T Dascombe (9-4 fav) R Hodges 6 ran

FORM FOCUS Sierra Bay beaten a distance 4th of 5 to Shining Light in handicap chase at Leicester (2m 4f 110yd, good to soft), previously beat Buckland Lad (8lb better off) 8l in 4-runner handicap chase at Towcester (2m 110yd, soft). Native Charm beat River Wye 4l in 9-runner novice chase at Warwick (2m, good to soft), previously beat Gorman 12l in 4-runner novice chase at Plumpton (2m 2f, good to soft). Robins Pride beat Morstock (8lb better off) 9l in 5-runner handicap chase at Wincanton (2m, heavy). Quango 10l 3rd of 7 to Oscail An Doras in handicap chase at Huntingdon (2m 110yd, soft), previously beaten a distance 4th of 7 to King Of Sparta in handicap chase at Wincanton (2m 5f, good to soft).

NATIVE CHARM has impressed in novice events her last two starts and does not look overburdened here.

2.55 WILLIAM HILL HURDLE [SHOWCASE RACE AND TOTE TRIFECTA RACE] (Handicap: £5,504: 3m 110yd) (18 runners)

401 116-11 NATIVE FIELD 32 (F,S) (Ian Johnson) D Wintle 10-11-10 J Mogford (7) 89
402 520-23 SMITH TOO 32 (CD,F,G) (A Smith) Mrs J Pitman 11-11-3 Mr T Gibney (7) 111
403 0111-2 LANSDOWNE 184 (BF,D,F,G,S) (H Shuns) Miss K Marks 11-11-2 DOUBTFUL 113
404 0-U122 BE MY MOT 18 (CD,G,S) (R Winchester & Son) D Grissell 7-11-1 N Williamson 111
405 24-206 BROWNES HILL LAD 48 (G,S) (Mrs B Marchant) R O'Sullivan 7-11-1 M A Fitzgerald 120
406 613103 SULAWESI 18 (C,F,S) (J Joseph) N Twiston-Davies 6-11-0 J Goldstein (5) [illegible]
407 2-4111 ARCTIC CHANTER 34 (D,G,S) (Exe Valley Racing) P Hobbs 7-10-9 R Dunwoody 123
408 2115-5 SEIZE THE DAY 18 (G,S) (Mrs N Coombe) M Coombe 11-10-8 Miss M Coombe 119
409 0350/4 TIM 7 (CD,F,S) (P Piper) J Jenkins 9-10-8 J Osborne –
410 320415 WONTCOSTALOTBUT 29 (S) (Wontcostalot Partnership) M Wilkinson 5-10-6 W Marston 121
411 -51242 WELSH SILK 13 (G,S) (Mrs D Blackshaw) D Gandolfo 7-10-5 C Llewellyn 122
412 15-03P DOYENNE 32 (B,F) (Grey Mare Partnership) Mrs D Haine 5-10-5 C Maude 117
413 13F/12 ATAVISTIC 70 (G) (Mrs J Emery, A Staple & E Mones) P Hobbs 7-10-3 R Widger (5) 108
414 2-5343 ANOTHER NIGHT 13 (BF,S) (Sunset Partnership) P Murphy 5-10-2 R Farrant 115
415 1F-3P2 SOPHIE MAY 29 (F,S) (J Daniels) D Moore 8-10-0 B Powell 77
416 3-5460 ROYAL ARCTIC 28 (C,D,G,S) (T Syder) S Mellor 9-10-0 C Webb 120
417 P1/P4U HI HEDLEY 6 (D,F,G) (G Hubbard) G Hubbard 9-10-0 A Maguire 43
418 5-5506 SMUGGLER'S POINT 29 (V,F,G) (J Wallis) J Bridger 9-10-0 M Batchelor (5) 93

Long handicap: Royal Arctic 9-12, Hi Hedley 9-7, Smuggler's Point 8-3.

BETTING: 7-2 Arctic Chanter, 5-1 Be My Mot, 8-1 Native Field, Smith Too, 10-1 Sulawesi, Welsh Silk, 12-1 Atavistic, Sophie May, 16-1 others.

1998: TOMPETOO 7-11-0 C Llewellyn (3-1 fav) N Twiston-Davies 15 ran



FORM FOCUS Native Field beat Palace Of Gold 2½l in 6-runner handicap hurdle at Haydock (2m 7f 110yd, soft) with Smith Too (7lb better off) 8½l 3rd. Be My Mot 3l 2nd of 6 to Melody Maid in handicap hurdle at Kempton (3m 110yd, heavy) with Sulawesi (1lb better off) 12l 3rd. Brownes Hill Lad 12l 6th of 10 to Harry in handicap hurdle at Taunton (2m 3f 110yd, good). Arctic Chanter beat Honey Mount 7l in 8-runner handicap hurdle at Taunton (3m 110yd, good to soft), previously beat Walter's Destiny 17l in 13-runner handicap hurdle at Exeter (2m 7f, good). Seize The Day beaten a distance 5th of 6 to Three Farthings in handicap hurdle at Wincanton (2m 6f, heavy), previously 8¼l 5th of 12 to Galatasori Jane in amateur handicap hurdle at Chepstow (3m, good). Welsh Silk 1½l 2nd of 8 to Just Nip in handicap hurdle at Fontwell (2m 6f 110yd, heavy), previously 3¼l 4th of 8 to Big Archie in handicap chase at Huntingdon (3m, good to firm). Doyenne pulled up in handicap hurdle at Doncaster (2m 4f, good), previously 1¼l 3rd of 12 to Dashing Dollar in handicap hurdle at Windsor (2m 6f 110yd, good) with Wontcostalotbut (3lb worse off) 2¼l 4th. Atavistic 2l 2nd of 4 to Dom Beltrano in handicap hurdle at Newton Abbot (2m 6f, soft), previously beat Piper's Rock 1½l in 8-runner handicap hurdle at Fontwell (2m 6f 110yd, good). Another Night 27l 3rd of 5 to Takeamemo in handicap hurdle at Fontwell (2m 2f 110yd, heavy), previously 13l 4th of 13 to Charlie Banker in handicap hurdle at Windsor (2m 4f, good to soft). Sophie May neck 2nd of 11 to Scotbere in handicap hurdle at Folkestone (2m 6f 110yd, heavy) with Hi Hedley (4lb worse off) 30l 4th, Wontcostalotbut (3lb better off) 31l 5th and Smuggler's Point (19lb worse off) 33l 6th.

BE MY MOT out of the handicap when going close latest, has good claims now off a 2lb lower mark.

3.25 HANWORTH HANDICAP CHASE

(£5,472: 3m) (4 runners)

501 221/33 KING LUCIFER 25 (D,F,G,S) (Mrs A Davies) D Nicholson 10-11-10 A Maguire 131
502 1P1-PP RAMALLAH 27 (G,S) (Maidens Green Partnership) Miss H Knight 10-11-1 J Culloty 137
503 26-131 BANK AVENUE 88 (CD,F,S) (S Hemstock) M Pitman 8-10-10 T J Murphy 125
504 -11114 EXECUTIVE KING 18 (CD,S) (G Hubbard) G Hubbard 8-10-7 A P McCoy [illegible]

BETTING: 7-4 Executive King, 2-1 King Lucifer, 5-2 Bank Avenue, 8-1 Ramallah.

1998: SAIL BY THE STARS 9-11-1 S Wynne (7-2) T Forster 9 ran

FORM FOCUS King Lucifer 22l 3rd of 7 to Tordell Express in handicap chase at Ascot (2m 110yd, good to soft), previously 25l 3rd of 6 to Random Harvest in handicap chase at Wetherby (3m 1f, good). Ramallah beat Coole Hill 6l in 11-runner handicap chase at Exeter (2m 7f 110yd, good) on final start last season. Bank Avenue beat Linton Rocks 2½l in 9-runner handicap chase at Kempton (3m, good to soft), previously 5l 3rd of 6 to Lough Tully in novice chase at Uttoxeter (3m, good to firm). Executive King beaten a distance 4th of 7 to Lord Of The River in novice chase grade 1 at Kempton (3m, soft), previously beat Lord Of The River 17l in 5-runner novice chase grade 2 at Lingfield (2m, soft).

EXECUTIVE KING, unable to dictate when below his best latest, should get things his own way here.

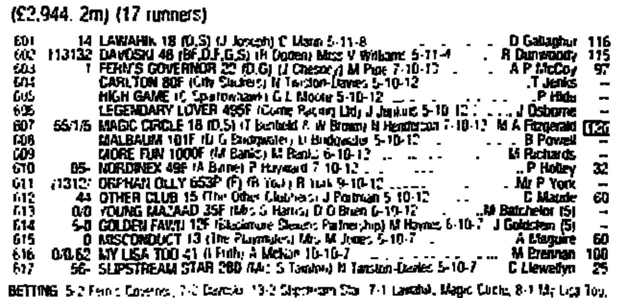
4.00 ASHFORD NOVICES HURDLE

(£2,944: 2m) (17 runners)

601 14 LAWAHIK 18 (D,S) (J Joseph) C Mann 5-11-8 D Gallagher 116
602 113132 DAVOSKI 48 (BF,D,F,G,S) (R Ogden) Miss V Williams 5-11-4 R Dunwoody 115
603 1 FERN'S GOVERNOR 22 (D,G) (J Chesney) M Pipe 7-10-12 A P McCoy 97
604 CARLTON 80F (City Slickers) N Twiston-Davies 5-10-12 T Jenks –
605 HIGH GAME (C Sparrowhawk) G L Moore 5-10-12 P Hide –
606 LEGENDARY LOVER 495F (Come Racing Ltd) J Jenkins 5-10-12 J Osborne –
607 55/1/5 MAGIC CIRCLE 18 (D,S) (T Benfield & W Brown) N Henderson 7-10-12 M A Fitzgerald [illegible]
608 MALBALIM 101F (D G Bridgwater) D Bridgwater 5-10-12 B Powell –
609 MORE FUN 1000F (M Banks) M Banks 6-10-12 M Richards –
610 05- NORDINEX 49F (A Barne) P Hayward 7-10-12 P Holley 32
611 /1312/ ORPHAN OLLY 653P (F) (R Tate) R Tate 9-10-12 Mr P York –
612 44 OTHER CLUB 15 (The Other Club) J Pearman 5-10-12 C Maude 60
613 0/0 YOUNG MAZAAD 35F (Mrs S Harris) D O'Brien 6-10-12 M Batchelor (5) –
614 5-0 GOLDEN FAWN 12F (Blackmore Sleepers Partnership) M Hoyme 6-10-7 J Goldstein (5) –
615 0 MISCONDUCT 13 (The Playmakers) Mrs M Jones 5-10-7 A Maguire 60
616 0/0.62 MY LISA TOO 41 (I Firth) A Melkin 10-10-7 M Brennan 100
617 56- SLIPSTREAM STAR 280 (Mrs S Taylor) N Twiston-Davies 5-10-7 C Llewellyn 25

BETTING: 5-2 Fern's Governor, 7-2 Davoski, 13-2 Slipstream Star, 7-1 Lawahik, Magic Circle, 8-1 My Lisa Too, 12-1 Carlton, 20-1 others.

1998: ROAD RACER 5-11-4 J P McCarthy (7-4 fav) F R Walter 14 ran



FORM FOCUS Lawahik 11l 4th of 9 to Grecian Dart in novice hurdle at Kempton (2m, soft) with Magic Circle (5lb better off) 11l 5th. Davoski ½l 2nd of 12 to Mersey Beat in novice handicap hurdle at Taunton (2m 1f, good), previously 4¼l 3rd of 17 to Premier Generation in novice handicap hurdle at Cheltenham (2m 110yd, good). Fern's Governor beat Ecan Heights 10l in 12-runner novice hurdle at Ludlow (2m, good). Carlton fair handicapper on the Flat at around 7f for Walter Geoff Lewis. Nordinex 36l 5th of 15 to Sheriff Creek in selling hurdle at Huntingdon (2m 110yd, good), previously 32l 8th of 12 to Major Change in maiden hurdle at Taunton (2m 1f, good to firm). Other Club 44l 4th of 13 to Lucky Mopsie in novice hurdle at Taunton (2m 1f, good to soft), previously 11l 4th of 14 to Perfect Venue in novice hurdle at Taunton (2m 1f, good to soft). Young Mazaad beaten a distance 10th of 11 to Eurusun in novice hurdle at Leicester (2m, good to soft), previously 16l 7th of 19 to Fu Dawn in 3yo juvenile novice hurdle at Windsor (2m, good to firm). Misconduct 31l 7th of 19 to Premier Generation in novice hurdle at Warwick (2m, soft). My Lisa Too 8l 2nd of 14 to Grecian Dart in novice hurdle at Windsor (2m, good to soft) with Golden Fawn (level) 67l 10th. Slipstream Star 19l 6th of 12 to Young Spartacus in novice hurdle at Ludlow (2m, good), previously 53l 5th of 8 to Petite Risk in 4yo novice hurdle at Ludlow (2m, good to soft).

FERN'S GOVERNOR ran out an impressive winner on his hurdles bow and can follow up.

COURSE SPECIALISTS

TRAINERS	Wins	Rnrs	%	JOCKEYS	Wins	Rnrs	%
D Gandolfo	6	19	31.6	J Osborne	19	55	34.5
D Nicholson	18	65	27.7	A Maguire	18	73	24.7
C Mann	5	21	23.8	T J Murphy	5	21	23.8
N Twiston-Davies	10	47	21.3	R Dunwoody	18	83	21.7
O Sherwood	7	33	21.2	M Fitzgerald	22	107	20.6
Mrs J Pitman	5	24	20.8	C Llewellyn	8	48	16.7
N Henderson	13	66	19.8	C Maude	4	25	16.0

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Kempton Park: 1.50 Sabre Butt, 2.55 Doyenne. **Wolverhampton:** 3.40 Madame Maxi.

CYCLING

Riis issues strong denial over new claims

By Jeremy Whittle

BJARNE RIIS, the winner of the Tour de France in 1996, and Deutsche Telekom, his team, have issued furious denials after allegations against them in the Danish media of systematic blood doping.

Riis, who caused controversy in Denmark during the scandal-ridden Tour de France last year with his refusal to condemn categorically the use of erythropoietin (EPO), the performance-enhancing blood agent, beat Miguel Induráin, of Spain, the five-times Tour winner, during the 1996 Tour, after finishing third in 1995.

The latest allegations centre on Riis's widely-varying red blood cell count in July 1995, when he consistently challenged Induráin in the Tour's time-trials. According to a television documentary, Riis's haematocrit (red blood cell count), tested privately by his team, ranged between 41.1 per cent in January 1995 and 56.3 per cent on July 10, 1995, days after the Dane wore the Tour race leader's yellow jersey.

Under guidelines laid down by the International Cycling Union, riders tested with haematocrit levels in excess of 50 per cent are automatically prevented from racing to safeguard their health. These guidelines were introduced in 1997, as the fears over widespread use of EPO gained ground.

"The documents shown in the programme are dubious and we don't know where they came from," a Telekom team spokesman said. "They don't prove anything."

Riis has denied that the figures refer to his blood count. "Those figures aren't mine," he said. "Anybody can come up with a piece of paper. I don't even remember having my blood tested on that day. Of course I have never used EPO."

After his third-place finish in the 1995 Tour, Riis left Gewiss to join the Telekom team in 1996. His arrival transformed the German team, with his own Tour victory in 1996 and that of Jan Ullrich, his prodigious young teammate, the following summer. During the Tour last summer, when both Riis, who acted as the riders' spokesperson, and Ullrich emerged unscathed from a race ravaged by doping scandals, Deutsche Telekom officials announced their intention to invest in anti-doping measures as part of a new openness in the sport.

"All our riders are clean," Telekom insisted yesterday. "They are subject to daily medical controls and even to independent controls. The authorities can come and inspect us any time."

Laurent Jalabert, the former *world No 1, was also implicat*ed in the programme, which claimed to have found bin bags of used syringes and ampoules of EPO in a hotel room used by Jalabert's ONCE team during the 1995 Tour of Spain. Jalabert and his ONCE team-mates stormed out of the *Tour de France last July in pro*test after a series of police raids and arrests.



Riis: denies allegations



ROB HOWARTH

Yellow peril: Le Marquand lines up a shot with one of his unique coloured bowls at the world indoor championships

Colour issue exposes bowls bias

By David Rhys Jones

A LITTLE piece of bowls history was made at Potters Leisure Resort on the Norfolk coast yesterday when David Le Marquand, a potato grower from Jersey, became the first competitor to use coloured bowls in the world indoor singles championships.

Spectators, accustomed to sombre shades of black and brown, looked on in disbelief as the bright yellow bowls rolled up and down the portable rink. The bowls attracted a lot of attention and provoked *some ribald comments, but* Le Marquand handled them, and the situation, astutely, giving Robert Weale a tremendous fight before the Welsh champion of 1997 edged home 6-7, 7-0, 7-1, 0-7, 7-2.

The introduction of *coloured bowls, which are being* developed and marketed by Taylor Bowls, a long-established Scottish firm of bowls manufacturers, is likely to divide bowls into two camps — the traditionalists and the reformists.

The launch yesterday was acclaimed by some, who felt that the bowls added a new di*mension to the game, making it more attractive, particularly* to youngsters, but it was scorned by others, who believe that coloured bowls will create problems.

Robert Newman, at 24 one of the youngest competitors, said: "I can't see them taking off. Club bowlers are not going to buy them and it's going to be a tremendous problem for the retailers, who already have to stock different makes, sizes and weights."

Willie Wood, one of the sport's elder statesmen, agreed. "I think they look dreadful," he said, "and so big. As a player, I wouldn't want to leave just one yellow bowl in the head, because they present such an inviting target for the opponent."

However, Ian Schuback, the charismatic Australian, gave the idea his approval. "They introduce a modern look and spice the game up a bit. I'm just a bit concerned about the set that David is playing with, because they look very straight to me."

This latest development was ratified by the World Bowls Board and the World Indoor Bowls Council at a meeting during the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur and the use of coloured bowls has been permitted from January 1.

Le Marquand volunteered to use the coloured bowls after his own black bowls failed the green test at the weekend, when he arrived at Potters. There was an awkward moment when the yellow bowls also failed their first green test, but a further test proved that they were sufficiently biased and he took to the green proudly carrying his yellow missiles.

Paul Ingrouille, of Guernsey, was defeated in straight sets, 7-6, 7-1, 7-1, by Sandy Syme, the Scottish champion, from Coatbridge, where the world championships were first played 20 years ago.

Alex Marshall, from East Lothian, a former world pairs champion, indoors and out, was delighted to scrape home 2-7, 7-2, 7-5, 1-7, 7-3 against Billy Mellors, of Edinburgh, one of the brightest young prospects on the Scottish bowls scene.

SKIING

Maier digs deep to extend his advantage

By Our Sports Staff

HERMANN MAIER, of Austria, kept his nerve on the treacherous *Kuonisbergli* piste, in Adelboden, Switzerland, yesterday to secure a World Cup giant slalom victory and steal the limelight from Benjamin Raich, his team-mate.

The Olympic champion had promised revenge after finishing third behind Raich in a giant slalom race in his home town of Flachau last Sunday. Yesterday, Maier was as good as his word as he completed his sixth victory of the season with a combined time over the two runs of 2min 12.66sec.

Kjetil Andre Aamodt, of Norway, Maier's main rival in the overall World Cup standings, finished second in 2min 12.94sec. It was his first podium finish in giant slalom this season. Raich, who was chasing his third win in six days and who led the field after the first leg, finished third.

Bothered by a sore back that forced him to take painkillers before the race, Maier said that he had been considering missing the next races, in Wengen and Kitzbühel, to rest before the world championships in Vail, Colorado, next month. However, with Aamodt keeping up the pressure, he intends to talk to team doctors.

"I'm not sure about my programme, I'll make a decision soon," Maier, who tops the overall rankings with 911 points, 228 clear of Aamodt, said. "I have to think seriously about it because Aamodt is so close now."

Michael von Gruenigen, of Switzerland, retained the lead from Maier in the giant slalom standings by two points. Second after the first leg, Maier was at his best on his second run, showing no signs of pain or discomfort to record a time of 1min 6.86sec.

Raich also charged down the course, but a costly error at the start of his run denied the 20-year-old another fine victory. "I had no problem with the pressure," Raich, five times a junior world champion, said. "I've raced from the front before and know that kind of pressure. I'm just pleased to be on the podium after making a mistake at the top of the course."

Freshwater completes hat-trick in safe style

From a Correspondent in Tignes

ANDREW FRESHWATER may have erred on the side of caution, expecting softer snow and consequently a bumpier course, to finish fifth in the international downhill in the first event of the British Land national championships in Tignes, France, yesterday, but his performance was enough to secure his third consecutive British downhill title.

With further snow overnight having died away to leave a crystal clear day of Alpine sunshine and no wind, overhead conditions were near-perfect. Freshwater, 25, skied a safe line, expecting similar conditions to the two previous days of training, and he admitted later that he could have attacked more.

"I really expected it to be a bit softer and could have afforded to give it a bit more, but nevertheless I'm happy," he said. "The British title is always important, although I'm also looking at the overall title and that needs four good results — and this is one." Freshwater expects to do better in the international junior downhill today.

Marco Sullivan, 18, an American development squad member, won the event. The youngster from Squaw Valley is ranked among the top three juniors in the United States and gave it his all to win by just 0.001sec from Ivica Kostelic, of Croatia.

Tessa Pirie, 20, from Aberdeen, won the women's downhill to secure her third British women's title in four years. Pirie, showing the kind of form that has seen her vaulting up the world rankings since she returned to the British Land alpine team in the summer, after a two-year absence to study medicine, attacked confidently, finding her edges on the recent snow, to beat Anne Pipet, of France, by 0.64sec.

Chemine Alcott, 16, the British junior champion, took second place to set up a fascinating battle for the women's overall title, with the slalom and giant slalom, her favourite events, still to come.



By Robert Sheehan, Bridge Correspondent

This absurdity of modern bidding is from the 1998 Premier League. North-South were Peter Crouch and Steve Lodge, who play Precision Club.

Dealer West | Game all | IMPs

North: ♠ Q 10 6 3 ♥ K J 6 5 ♦ – ♣ A 9 7 4 3

West: ♠ 8 4 2 ♥ Q 9 8 2 ♦ J 8 7 6 ♣ K 6

East: ♠ K 5 ♥ A 7 ♦ A 5 4 3 2 ♣ Q 8 5 2

South: ♠ A J 9 7 ♥ 10 4 3 ♦ K Q 10 9 ♣ J 10

W	N	E	S
Pass	1 D (!)	Pass	1 S
Pass	3 D (!)	Pass	4 S
All Pass			

Contract: Four Spades by South. Lead: king of clubs.

One of the difficult areas of Strong Club systems like Precision is handling moderate opening bids with long clubs. You can't open One Club, as that would be conventional, showing any 17+ hand. So, many Precision Club players open One Diamond with either clubs or diamonds as their longest suit.

On North's motley collection I can't see much wrong with passing on the first round: you will be well placed to describe your hand with a take-out double if the *opponents bid diamonds;* if your partner's main suit is diamonds you can keep the bidding low on a misfit; and if your partner opens in a major you can show your support and diamond shortage with a splinter bid.

Steve Lodge's response of *One Spade was encouraging* but not forcing, and now Crouch made the weird bid of Three Diamonds. That apparently showed a raise to Three Spades with diamond shortage. I'm afraid it's all passed me by – I don't think I want to know how they would show a hand with good diamonds.

Despite the warning about the diamond duplication Lodge went on to game, and with the favourable lie of the spades managed to make ten tricks.

□ *The Times Book of Bridge 2*, featuring the best of Robert Sheehan's daily columns is now out. Order your copy from Chess & Bridge, 369 Euston Road, London NW1 3AR, tel: 0171 388 2404, price £7.99, post free for *Times* readers.

□ Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend *section on Saturday.*

KEENE on CHESS

By Raymond Keene, Chess Correspondent

Junior results

British juniors have recently scored some exceptional results, including the respective youth world championship titles achieved by Nicholas Pert and Ruth Sheldon towards the end of last year, 11-year-old Jessie Gilbert's in the world amateur championship for women at Hastings, and now a new age record by 10-year-old Murugan Thiruchelvam. He has become the youngest player ever to qualify for a place in a national championship.

Today I give two games from his qualifying tournament in York where he finished clear second and thus secured his place in the championship.

White: Watton
Black: Thiruchelvam
Fulprint York Open 1999
Queen's Gambit Declined

1	d4	d5
2	c4	e6
3	Nc3	Nf6
4	cxd5	exd5
5	Bg5	Be7
6	Qc2	h6
7	Bh4	b6
8	e3	0-0
9	Bd3	Bb7
10	Nf3	Nbd7
11	0-0	c5
12	Qe2	Ne4
13	Bg3	f5
14	dxc5	bxc5
15	Rfd1	Bf6
16	Rac1	Kh8
17	Bb5	a6
18	Bxd7	Qxd7
19	Be5	Qe6
20	Bxf6	Rxf6
21	Ne1	Rc8
22	Nd3	d4
23	exd4	cxd4
24	Na4	Qxa2
25	Nac5	Nc3
26	Qe7	Rf7
27	Qd6	Ne2+
28	Kf1	Nxc1
29	Rxc1	Qd5
30	Nxb7	Rxc1+
31	Nxc1	Qxb7
32	Nd3	Qb5
33	Ke2	Rd7
34	Qe6	Rd8
35	Qa2	a5
36	Kd2	Qd5
37	Qa3	Rb8
38	Nf4	Qb3
39	Ng6+	Kh7
40	Nf8+	Kg8

White resigns

Diagram of final position

White: Westra
Black: Thiruchelvam
Fulprint York Open, 1999
Caro-Kann Defence

1	e4	c6
2	d4	d5
3	exd5	cxd5
4	c4	Nf6
5	Nc3	Nc6
6	Nf3	e6
7	Be2	Be7
8	0-0	0-0
9	Re1	b6
10	cxd5	Nxd5
11	Nxd5	Qxd5
12	Be3	Bb7
13	Qa4	Bf6
14	Qb3	Rfd8
15	Rad1	Rd7
16	Qxd5	Rxd5
17	Bc4	Rd6
18	Bf4	Rd7
19	Bb5	Rad8
20	Bxc6	Bxc6
21	Ne5	Rxd4
22	Rxd4	Rxd4
23	Nxc6	Rd4
24	Rd1	Ra4
25	a3	g6
26	Rd2	Rc4

White resigns

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

PINDA
a. A dance
b. A peanut
c. The female panda

RICASSO
a. Rice with fowl
b. Part of a sword
c. Musical direction for repeat

OCOTILLO
a. A Mexican dance
b. A spiny shrub
c. A Roman Catholic vestment

REVERDIE
a. A visual echo
b. A spring song
c. A second flowering

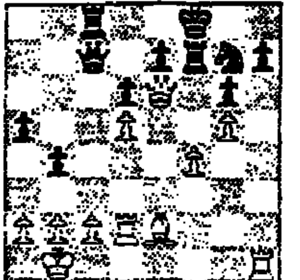
Answers on page 42

WINNING MOVE

By Raymond Keene

White to play. This position is from the game Gallagher — Habibi, Mendrisio, 1998.

How did White make a decisive breakthrough into the black position?



Solution on page 42

RUGBY LEAGUE: MOTOR DEALERS STEP IN TO FUEL SECOND TIER OF GAME

First division secures backing

By Christopher Irvine

FORD motor dealers in the north of England are to sponsor the first division, which begins next month, in the first agreement of its kind outside the Super League.

The lower divisions, which have been amalgamated into an 18-team competition for the 1999 season, struggled by without a backer last season after the two-year deal struck by Super League clubs with JJB Sports.

"Not only is this a substantial sponsorship, it indicates the commercial potential that exists for the game outside Super League," a Rugby Football League (RFL) spokesman said. The competition will almost certainly be known as the Ford First Division.

The agreement comes at a time of greater financial stability for first division clubs after their £10.8 million release payment from the original Super League deal, which has freed them to negotiate their own television contracts.

The RFL is to meet Super League Europe (SLE) officials to discuss SLE proposals to deduct points at the start of the following season, rather than withholding television income, from those clubs that exceed the players' salary cap of 51 per cent of gross income. Wigan Warriors fell foul of the cap, which was introduced last year, and missed out on valuable income.

If the SLE plan is accepted, the spending limit will remain at 51 per cent, but with a minimum threshold of £1 million and a penalty system for offenders. Clubs who spend up to 55 per cent of income on salaries will suffer a two-point penalty deduction the next season; those exceeding the limit up to 60 per cent will lose two points and half of any prize-money; those spending more than 60 per cent would be docked four points and forfeit all prize-money.

Wigan are seeking damages in excess of £30,000 from Wendell Sailor after the Brisbane Broncos and Australia wing failed to contest a High Court action for reneging on a two-year agreement to play for Wigan from this year.

FOR THE RECORD

BOWLS

HOPTON-ON-SEA, Norfolk: World indoor championships: Singles: Preliminary round: W Jackson (Eng) bt J Mills (Eng) 5-7, 3-7, 7-4, 7-2, 7-3; J Greensiade (Wales) bt N Cobell (Wales) 4-7, 7-6, 7-2, 7-2. **First round:** S Syme (Scot) bt P Ingrouille (Guer) 7-6, 7-1, 7-1; A Marshall (Eng) bt B Mellors (Scot) 2-7, 7-2, 7-5, 1-7, 7-3.

CRICKET

TOUR MATCH: Boland (first day of three): West Indians 220 and 307 (C L Hooper 70, P A Wallace 57, B C Lara 53; C M Willoughby 5-60); Boland 135 and 123-5. *Match drawn.*

FOOTBALL

FA CUP: Third-round replays: Postponed: Barnsley v Swindon; Notts County v Sheffield Utd.
SCOTTISH LEAGUE: Second division: Postponed: Forfar v Clyde; Livingston v East Fife.

ICE HOCKEY

NATIONAL LEAGUE (NHL): Montreal 3 St Louis 1; Washington 4 New York Islanders 3; New Jersey 2 Ottawa 4; Philadelphia 8 Nashville 0; Phoenix 1 Buffalo 0; San Jose 4 Los Angeles 0.

MOTOR RALLYING

DAKAR RALLY: 11th stage (Timbuktu to Nema, 548km). **Cars:** 1, K Shinozuka (Japan, Mitsubishi) 6hr 5min 31sec; 2, J M Servia (Sp, Schlesser) at 1min 56sec; 3, J-L Schlesser (Fr, Schlesser) 8:07; 4, J Kleinschmidt (Ger, Mitsubishi) 8.14; 5, M Prieto (Sp, Mitsubishi) 8.33. **Leading overall positions:** 1, Schlesser 48hr 18min 11sec; 2, Prieto at 8min 57sec; 3, Kleinschmidt 45.24. **Motorbikes:** 1, A Cox (SA, KTM) 8:04 56; 2, K Tiainen (Fin, KTM) 3 18; 3, T Magnaldi (Fr, KTM) 5 37; 4, F Meoni (It, KTM) 5 59; 5, R Sainct (Fr, BMW) 10 12. **Leading overall positions:** 1, Sainct 38 38:08; 2, Magnaldi 2:01; 3, Meoni 16 13. **British placing:** 8, J Deacon (KTM) 1 59:37.

SAILING

MELBOURNE: World championships *(after sixth day)*. **President of the IOC Cup** (best nation): 1, Great Britain 33pts; 2, Australia 29; 3, Sweden 27. **Laser Gold fleet** (after 10 races, two discards): 1, B Ainslie (GB) 20pts; 2, R Scheidt (Br) 34; 3, K Sunesson (Swe) 37. **Europe** (after four races): 1, S Robertson (GB) 10pts; 2, M Matthysse (Holl) 14; 3, S Multala (Fin) 15. **Finn Gold Cup** (after five races): 1, M Kusznierewicz (Pol) 25pts; 2, K Kuret (Cro) 30; 3, I Percy (GB) 38. **49er** (after nine races): 1, C Nicholson and E Smyth (Aus) 13pts; 2, F and G Bruni (It) 14; 3, J and C McKee (US) 14. **British placing:** 6, T Robinson and I Walker 21. **Soling** (after four races): 1, S Westergaard, J Bojsen Moller and B Westergaard (Den) 17pts; 2, J Schuemann, G Barr and I Borkowski (Ger) 18; 3, I Walker, N Drennan and S Jackson (Aus) 37. **British placing:** 6, A Beadsworth, R Sydenham and B Parkin 51. **470 men: Gold fleet** (after three races): 1, C Tomasz and M Mitja (Slovenia) 15pts; 2, J Molund and M Rahm (Swe) 22; 3, S and J Tomasz (Pol) 26. **British placing:** 23, N Rogers and J Glanfield 61. **Silver fleet** (after three races): 1, P Foerster and B Merrick (US) 5pts; 2, K and K Nakamura (Japan) 12; 3, E Hamazaki and Y Miyai (Japan) 19. **British placing:** 5, D Edwards and A May 32. **470 women: Gold fleet** *(after three races)*: 1, S Kedmy and A Fabikant (Isr) 13pts; 2, N Birkner and W Buelle (Ger) 14; 3, S and M Ward (Den) 14. **British placing:** 18, K Nurton and B Watson 59. **Silver fleet** (after three races): 1, C Simone and S Usandizaga (Arg) 5pts; 2, L Stanforth and A Mathews (Can) 12; 3, B Hooper and C Brisebois (Aus) 19. **British placing:** 4, H Lucas and M Beech 21.

CLIPPER ROUND-THE-WORLD RACE: Leg 2d (Galapagos to Hawaii; with miles to go): 1, Ariel (A Thomson) 1,489; 2, Seneca (R Dean) 1,543; 3, Chrysolite (T Hedges) 1,557; 4, Mermerus (B Sollers) 1,575; 5, Taeping (N Fleming) 1,623; 6, Thermopylae (M Tod) 1,701; 7, Antiope (K Harris) 1,748.

SKIING

TIGNES, France: British Land national championships: Downhill: Men: 1, A Freshwater (Loch Insh/British Land Alpine Ski Team) 1min 17.26sec; 2, J Moulder-Brown (London/BLAST) 1:18.21; 3, R Green (Falkirk/BLAST) 1:18.64. **Women:** 1, T Pirie (Aberdeen/BLAST) 1:20.50; 2, C Alcott (Twickenham/BLAST) 1:22.93; 3, D Bosher *(Teddington/BLAST) 1:23.91*. **International downhill: Men:** 1, M Sullivan (US) 1 16.77; 2, I Kostelic (Cro) 1.16.78; 3, S Macartney (US) 1:16.97. **British placing:** 5, Freshwater 1:17.26. **Women:** 1, Pirie 1:20.50; 2, A Pipet (Fr) 1.21 14; 3, A Lamour (Fr) 1.22.12.

TENNIS

SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT: Men: First round: L Hewitt (Aus) bt P Rafter (Aus) 7-6, 6-1; T Muster (Austria) bt J Bjorkman (Swe) 7-6, 6-7, 6-3; J Stoltenberg (Aus) bt A Berasategui (Sp) 6-1, 6-7, 7-6; C Moya (Sp) bt T Johansson (Swe) 6-3, 7-6; N Kiefer (Ger) bt M Damm (Cz) 5-7, 6-3, 6-2; T Woodbridge (Aus) bt M Tebbutt (Aus) 1-6, 6-0, 7-6; G Kuerten (Br) bt G Rusedski (GB) 1-6, 6-3, 6-4; C Pioline (Fr) bt S Draper (Aus) 6-4, 7-6; T Martin (US) bt H Arazi (Mor) 6-1, 6-3; M Puerta (Arg) bt J Siemerink (Holl) 6-2, 6-4; K Kucera (Slovakia) bt F Clavet (Sp) 6-4, 7-6. **Women: First round:** A Huber (Ger) bt T Panova (Russ) 6-2, 6-1; S Williams (US) bt I Gorrochategui (Arg) 6-4, 6-2; S Graf (Ger) bt A Sugiyama (Japan) 6-0, 6-4; A Kournikova (Russ) bt S Farina (It) 4-6, 6-3, 7-5. **Second round:** B Schett (Austria) bt C Martinez (Sp) 6-3, 7-6; M Hingis (Switz) bt A Molik (Aus) 6-1, 6-2.

AUCKLAND OPEN: First round: F Meligeni (Br) bt A Hunt (NZ) 6-1, 7-5; F Mantilla (Sp) bt L Tieleman (It) 7-6, 6-2; F Vicente (Sp) bt J Tarango (US) 6-2, 4-6, 6-4; D Vacek (Cz) bt G Canas (Arg) 4-6, 7-5, 6-3; M Zabaleta (Arg) bt D Sanguinetti (It) 3-6, 6-3, 6-2; A Pavel (Rom) bt M Rios (Chile) 7-5, 2-0, ret; D Hrbaty (Slovakia) bt F Squillari (Arg) 6-2, 6-4; A Martin (Sp) bt A Ilie (Aus) 6-3, 6-4; A Voinea (Rom) bt J Courier (US) 7-6, 6-1.

TODAY'S FIXTURES

FOOTBALL

Kick-off 7.30 unless stated

FA Cup
Third-round replays
Fulham v Southampton (7.45)
Leeds v Rushden and Diamonds (7.45)
Swansea v West Ham (7.45)

Scottish League
First division
Airdrie v Greenock Morton

Second division
Partick v Alloa (7.45)

Tennent's Scottish Cup
Second round
Queen's Park v Clachnacuddin

Second-round replay
Stirling v Montrose

DR MARTENS LEAGUE: Southern division: Brackley Town v Baldock. **League Cup: Second round:** Boston v Stamford; Racing Club Warwick v Sutton Coldfield Town. **Third round:** Newport AFC v Bashley.
UNIBOND LEAGUE: Challenge Cup: Second-round replay: Bishop Auckland v Farsley Celtic.
RYMAN LEAGUE: First division: Croydon v Canvey Island. **Vandanel Trophy: Third round:** Harlow v Edgware.
THE TIMES FA YOUTH CUP: Third round: Gillingham v Leicester.
FOOTBALL LEAGUE YOUTH ALLIANCE: North West Conference: Carlisle Utd v Bury (1.30); Tranmere v Oldham (12.0).
AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: First division: Barnet v Fulham (2.0); Oxford v Charlton; Portsmouth v Norwich; Swindon v Brentford (7.15); Watford v Chelsea.
PONTIN'S LEAGUE: Premier division: Aston Villa v Derby (7.0); Preston v Liverpool (7.15). **First division:** Bolton v Coventry (7.0). **Second division:** Shrewsbury v Sheffield Utd (7.0); Scarborough v Wrexham (2.0). **Third division:** Halifax v Darlington (7.0); Hartlepool v Chester (7.0); Wigan v Rochdale (2.0). **League Cup: Group two:** York v Hull (7.0). **Group four:** Huddersfield v Chesterfield (7.0). **Group five:** Stockport v Bury (at Hyde Utd, 7.0). **Group six:** Notts County v Bradford (2.0).
FA CARLSBERG VASE: Fourth round: Bowers United v Woodbridge Town (at Billericay Town).
SCHWEPPES ESSEX SENIOR LEAGUE: Eton Manor v Great Wakering.
COMPLETE MUSIC HELLENIC LEAGUE: Premier division: EFC Cheltenham v Shortwood.
ARNOTT INSURANCE NORTH LEAGUE: First division: Bedlington Terriers v South Shields.
SCREWFIX DIRECT LEAGUE: Premier division: Bridport v Elmore.
CALOR COUNTY ANTRIM SHIELD: Semifinal: Crusaders v Distillery (at Solitude).
COURAGE COMBINED COUNTIES LEAGUE: Premier division: Feltham v Viking Sports; Sandhurst v Bedfont.
JEWSON EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE: Premier division: Ipswich v Felixstowe Port and Town.
UNIJET SUSSEX COUNTY LEAGUE: First division: Hailsham v Eastbourne Tn.
INTERLINK EXPRESS MIDLAND INVITATION CUP: Third round: Feckenham v Cradley Town.
NORTH WESTERN TRAINS LEAGUE: First division: Leek CSOB v Cheadle. **League Cup: Second round:** Atherton Collieries v St Helens Town.

RUGBY UNION

Welsh Challenge Trophy
Pool A
Caerphilly v Edinburgh Reivers (7.15)
Pool B
Bridgend v Glasgow Caledonians (7.15)

THE TIMES STUDENT TROPHY: Semifinals: Brunel v Grenoble (at Richmond Athletic Ground, 7.30); University College Cork v Harper Adams (at UCC, 7.0).

OTHER SPORT

BASKETBALL: Budweiser League: Newcastle Eagles v Milton Keynes Lions (7.0). **Uni-ball Trophy: Group A:** Thames Valley Tigers v Leicester Riders (8.0).
ICE HOCKEY: Sekonda Superleague: Ayr Scottish Eagles v Sheffield Steelers (7.30); London Knights v Manchester Storm (7.0).

Corruption must not claim Olympic ideal again

ROB HUGHES



believes the Olympics are worth fighting for

With each passing day and each revelation that the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City were procured with the aid of bribes, it becomes obvious that none of the Olympic rings is a halo.

If there were such a halo, it would hardly adorn the head of the organisation. Juan Antonio Samaranch, 78, the president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), reiterated yesterday that, whatever the scale of corruption confirmed by ongoing investigations, the Games will go on in Salt Lake City in February 2002. Logistically, we can understand why.

However, the morality of the IOC is scarred by reports that as many as 25 of its 114 members are implicated in allegations that they accepted cash payments, scholarships for their relatives, a land deal exceeding $70,000 (around £40,000), medical operations and sexual favours paid for by Salt Lake City Bid credit card.

In Utah, a Mormon state that has been shocked by its "Saltgate", the remaining $250,000 needed towards the operating budget for the Games of $1.45 billion will be hard to find. In Lausanne, the home of the Olympic movement, two leading sponsors, Coca-Cola and Delta Airlines, have registered concern already.

In Sydney, the site of the summer Games of 2000, Andrew Thomson, a former sports minister of Australia, has suggested that the time will come, after the 2004 Olympics in Athens, to put out the Olympic flame for good.

Heaven forbid. This happened once before, when the Games in antiquity were abandoned because of corruption, yet, though they are contaminated today by unmanageable growth, by commercialism and nationalism, we should defend the Olympic ideal to our last breath.

Why? Because it is not the concept that is warped, but the dinosaurs who run the Games and some cheats who run in them. Because, despite the evidence that some have taken medals illegally and others would like to emulate that, there remains no more stirring sight in the world than the youth of hundreds of nations striving to prove themselves in the arena of sport. Better that, for sure, than war.

'The IOC has no time to spare'

That was the call — the taking part — that Baron de Coubertin made when he revived the Games in 1896. And if corruption could be beaten once, it can be beaten again.

The IOC has no time to spare because, barely two weeks from now, it hosts the most concerted attempt yet made to rid all sports, Olympic or otherwise, of the curse of drugs. Samaranch and his brethren have placed themselves in an invidious situation. They formed a court of arbitration, also in Lausanne, where sporting law can be adjudicated outside the expense of international lawyers, yet now the godfathers of the Olympic order must clear themselves of contamination.

It is good and bad that the clock races against them. Investigations made in haste are inevitably flawed, yet these privileged men and women must come to conclusions and weed out of their system those who blatantly sold votes for favours before they attempt to lead the world out of the drugs haze.

Sacrificial resignations may come, for separate investigations in Salt Lake City clearly name names of IOC members, notably from Africa, who have taken the biggest bribes. But there is an old Sicilian saying: *una mano lava l'altra* — one hand washes the other — that the IOC must avoid.

The uncomfortable question to be addressed right at the top of the agenda is what kind of a leader accepts expensive gifts himself and also attempts to exempt himself from the rule?

Samaranch no longer denies that he accepted two rifles, worth at least seven times the $150 limit that his executive committee laid down for the members. These Browning firearms from Utah were acceptable, Samaranch contends, because, as president, he does not vote on the Olympic cities.

Nonsense. No one has more influence than the president and few presidents have used it more than Samaranch. Nor was it pleasant to see Samaranch, day after day at the Nagano Winter Games, sporting a gold-braided collar advertising Mizuno, a Japanese sportswear manufacturer.

'Leaders must be above suspicion'

By example, the IOC president, the highest sporting office on earth, must be seen, like Caesar's wife, to be above suspicion. We hear that the Olympics might in future restrict the vote to the 11-member executive, but, surely, it would be politic also to make it an open ballot, transparent and accountable to the world.

The succession, when finally Samaranch gives way, is expected to go to Richard Pound, the Montreal lawyer, who has accepted the poisoned chalice of leading the IOC's internal investigation into wrongdoing over Salt Lake City. He finds it odious.

"Personally," Pound said, "I don't like this [corruption] to be out there, but I'm glad it is because it gives us the opportunity to look into it and, hopefully, that opportunity will put a chapter that appears to be somewhat disagreeable behind us."

It is more than an opportunity; it is an obligation. The Olympic Games are the property of mankind and the onus on the IOC is to squeeze out corruption — and to do it before the end of the month.

The ideal is worthless without trust and the leaders are not competent to tackle the contamination of drugs unless they are themselves above suspicion.

Rather than any compassion, they must remember that they all had the same opportunity to do what the Princess Royal did a decade ago — return all unsolicited gifts, all bribes, without thanks.

RUGBY UNION

RFU pays penalty for misconduct over clubs' revolt

BY DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

FOR the second successive month, the Rugby Football Union (RFU) has been found guilty of breaches of International Rugby Board (IRB) regulations. Last month, it was fined for its failure to take stronger action against English clubs playing unauthorised matches with Cardiff and Swansea; this month, its recent conduct has been found prejudicial to the game's best interests and a further penalty will be determined later this month.

It is hard to determine who is harming rugby the most these days. The crazy world of professionalism has set every man's hand against his neighbour, to the extent that the IRB can now accuse the RFU of being "factually inaccurate" in its presentation of evidence leading up to the IRB disciplinary hearing in Dublin nearly a month ago.

The board has rebutted, sentence by sentence, the assertion of the RFU that charges against it were invalid on procedural grounds and that there was no material case to answer. The issue between them is the action taken by leading English clubs in complaining last April to the European Commission about restrictive IRB practices, which prevented them from negotiating their own commercial agreements for competitions in which they were involved.

At that time, the IRB says, the RFU pledged "absolute and unqualified support" for the board in its response to the clubs' actions. The IRB disciplinary committee, which was chaired by Tim Gresson, New Zealand, and included Syd Millar, of Ireland, Rian Oberholzer, of South Africa, and Shiggy Konno, of Japan, found subsequent support to be less than lukewarm and was affronted that the RFU had not informed it of any change in stance.

That the RFU was in administrative chaos for much of last year has been accepted, to a degree, by the board; by late autumn, however, with a new administration in place, it found the RFU prepared to play hardball and, clearly, it does not like it. The upshot is that the RFU has been found to have breached the board's Bylaw No 7 and Gresson's disciplinary committee is now in the process of considering an appropriate penalty, which could range from another fine and imposition of costs to the dramatic, and unlikely, ultimate of expulsion.

The committee wants the IRB's legal advisers to address the potential sanction, to serve the decision on the RFU by tomorrow and any response from England to be forthcoming by January 21. Since the RFU has a management board meeting tomorrow, it should have some idea of its fate. Francis Baron, the union's chief executive, met Stephen Baines, his opposite number from the IRB, yesterday morning.

The union's response will be known after the meeting tomorrow, but, to judge by Baron's robust reaction to the board's decision last month to withhold £60,000 from IRB Trust funds, it will not take this latest development lying down.

Easterby promoted to Ireland squad

GUY EASTERBY, the London Scottish scrum half, who is qualified for Ireland through his Dublin-born mother, has been included in a 26-man training squad in Galway next week (Karl Johnston writes). Two members of the Irish Rugby Football Union Academy — Gordon D'Arcy, of Lansdowne, and Brian O'Driscoll, of UCD, both backs — have also been invited to attend.

Easterby, 27, whose brother, Simon, a flanker, excelled with the Ireland Under-21 side two seasons ago, was three times an Ireland A replacement last season.

Four players who were included in the previous national squad — Darragh O'Mahony, Pat Duignan, Mick Galway and Alan Quinlan — have failed to make the party.

SQUAD: Backs: C O' Shea, G Dempsey, J Bishop, J McWeeney, J Bell, K Maggs, R Henderson, E Elwood, D Humphreys, C McGuinness, C Scally, G Easterby. Forwards: P Clohessy, J Fitzpatrick, R Corrigan, P Wallace, K Wood, R Nesdale, P Johns, M O'Kelly, J Davidson, D O'Cuinneagain, E Miller, V Costello, T Brennan, A Ward.

Students on battle stations

BY MICHAEL AYLWIN

AFTER the dramatic events of the weekend in the European Cup come the semi-finals of the student version, *The Times* Trophy, tonight.

The passion displayed by Ulster in their victory over Stade Français is likely to be replicated in Cork, as University College, Cork (UCC) entertain Harper Adams, the agricultural college from Shropshire, while Brunel and Grenoble, the French student champions last season, should be involved in a similarly epic clash at the Richmond Athletic Ground.

Irish student rugby is particularly strong at the moment. With University College, Dublin (UCD) having disposed of Toulouse, the champions last season, in the qualifying rounds, UCC are unlikely to shirk the task of keeping the Irish flag flying in the tournament.

They earned their place in the semi-final by beating Northumbria. It was wrongly reported in this column last week that Northumbria had been stripped of several of their players in the qualifying stages by Newcastle Falcons. They lost them, in fact, to another, unnamed, local side, but were back at full strength for their 23-13 defeat in Cork.

Harper Adams have been the surprise package of the tournament. Based on a powerful pack, their passage to the semi-finals has been at the expense of Rome, Durham and Trinity, Carmarthen.

Brunel have claimed notable scalps in Swansea, who were finalists last year, and UCD. Drawing from the ranks of Saracens, Richmond and London Scottish, and coached by Paul Volley, the Wasps flanker, they will pose a serious threat to Grenoble, who secured their semi-final spot by beating Loughborough.



WILLIAM WEST

Plain sailing: Beadsworth, of Great Britain, and his crew lead the fleet on the way to victory in the fourth race of the Soling class yesterday

Ainslie spies Laser title on horizon

BY EDWARD GORMAN, SAILING CORRESPONDENT

BEN AINSLIE remains firmly on course for his first Laser class title at the expense of Robert Scheidt, of Brazil, and 138 other sailors, after a solid performance yesterday in a difficult, shifting breeze at the world sailing championships in Melbourne.

With just two more races to come today, Ainslie, 22, from Lymington, Hampshire, has extended his lead over Scheidt from five points on Monday to 14 last night. In the first race yesterday — the ninth of the series — Ainslie kept his head in tricky conditions to post his sixth win of the championship, while Scheidt could finish only eleventh.

In the second race, Ainslie was eleventh, but both Scheidt and Karl Sunesson, of Sweden, who has moved ahead of Michael Blackburn, of Australia, into third place, had their worst races of the regatta, finishing in 28th and 47th place respectively.

Ainslie needs to hold it together today to secure the prize and he sounded confident yesterday. "I'll try to get some good races in and not worry too much about the other sailors," he said. "They've all got worse discards than me, so I'll be looking to sail to win — I hope to, anyway."

In the Europe class, Shirley Robertson maintained her overall lead, adding two fourth places yesterday to her two wins on Monday. Her chances of an overall victory are looking good, with Carolijn Brouwer, of Holland, the title-holder, placed in the low twenties at present after being over the line early in the first race yesterday.

Iain Percy is now third overall in the Finn Gold Cup after winning the sixth race of the series, while Andy Beadsworth has moved up ten places to sixth in the Soling class after winning the fourth race of the series.

"A break at the start gave us a chance," Beadsworth said. "We had good pace and got into the shifts quickly and had established a good lead ten minutes into the race."

Lawrie Smith is now eleventh, but the leader remains Stig Westergaard, of Denmark, with Jochen Schuemann, of Germany, the triple Olympic gold medal-winner, in second place.

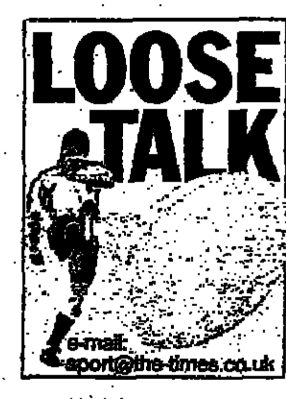
Tim Robinson and Ian Walker are now the top British pairing, in sixth place overall, in the 49ers after accumulating seven top-five finishes. They are now just eight points behind the leaders, Chris Nicholson and Ed Smyth, of Australia. Ian Barker and Daniel Phillips are twelfth while Andy and Ian Budgen have slipped to thirteenth place.

Sir Chay Blyth has announced that two of the identical 72ft steel yachts that will take part in the next BT Global Challenge, starting in September 2000, are to be built in China at the Kimis Yacht Company in Zuhahi. The decision is part of a strategy by the Challenge Business to attract sponsors from China and Hong Kong.

The BT Global Challenge, which is Sir Chay's third westabout circumnavigation for paying amateurs, is expected to involve up to 15 yachts. The plan to build two boats in China is made possible by the provision for flat-pack assembly of the new Rob Humphries-designed yachts.

Originally, Sir Chay had envisaged boats being built in several foreign countries. However, it now appears all the others will be built in Plymouth.

Bath consider taking plunge with Cooke



GEOFF COOKE, the former England manager, has denied reports linking him with the job of chief executive at Bath. "At this stage it is pure speculation. I have not had any contact with anyone from Bath. If anyone wants to talk to me, I would consider anything because I need a job," Cooke, now back living in Leeds, said yesterday.

Cooke, who hopes that the assets of Frank Warren, the Bedford owner, will soon be unfrozen, has been out of work since resigning from Goldington Road. Bedford still owe him substantial sums after their promotion from the second division of the Allied Dunbar Premiership last year.

Reports suggested that he had been invited to meet Andrew Brownsword, the backer of Bath, recently. It is no secret that Bath are looking for a chief executive who has rugby as well as business acumen and Cooke would have appeared to fit the bill. Bob Calleja, the club's general manager, said: "I cannot comment on individual names. The position is still open and I doubt it will be filled for at least three months."

Crossed wires

It appears that the "talking flags" experiment between linesmen and referees might need some fine-tuning — if Stuart Piercy's experience is anything to go by. The referee was in charge of the Northampton v London Irish Premiership game last Tuesday when he heard an unfamiliar voice in his earpiece yelling: "Come in, Gate 4." It kept happening and, after the match, Piercy discovered that he had been picking up the head of security at Franklin's Gardens issuing instructions on his walkie-talkie.

David Grashoff, of the East Midlands Society, had an even worse time of it last season, when refereeing Blackheath v Saracens in the Tetley's Bitter Cup. He kept hearing a local taxi company controller in his ear — and wasn't sure whether "Pick up No 10" referred to him or a driver on the street.

Absent friend

With the new year into its stride, attention can turn once more to the Five Nations Championship, which begins on February 6. England sit out the first round, waiting a fortnight for the Calcutta Cup meeting with Scotland at Twickenham. For Bill McLaren, it will be a bittersweet occasion. Because the match is on Sky Sports, it will be the first England v Scotland international at Twickenham that McLaren, now 75, will have missed since embarking on his great commentating career in 1955. Instead, he will be at Wembley for Wales against Ireland. "It will be very sad not to be there," McLaren said. "I have always loved Twickenham. It was the first international ground I ever went to after Murrayfield. At least I'll be in London on the day and will be able to hear the roar when Scotland score!"

☐ *Ulster's tremendous victory over Stade Français at Ravenhill was all too much for Willie Anderson, the former Ireland forward and London Irish coach. Anderson was acting as a summariser for radio, but, when the final whistle went, he was too choked with emotion to speak. Who said big men don't cry?*

Bristol fashion

Calling all Bristol fans . . . two local enthusiasts, Mark Hoskins and Dave Fox, are compiling an official photographic history of the club and would welcome any help with the project from supporters with interesting memorabilia. Hoskins said: "We would love to look at any Bristol items and possibly borrow one or two for reproduction. We guarantee we'll treat them with great care and return them as soon as possible." Hoskins can be contacted during the evenings on 0117 942 6414, Fox on 01454 884077. You had better hurry, Bristol may not exist in its present form for long!

Welsh for hire

The staff of Just Rentals, a firm that supplies televisions in South Wales, now includes no fewer than four stars of the small screen in Neil Jenkins, Martyn Williams, Dafydd James and Dale McIntosh. The Pontypridd international quartet can be seen on television one day and on doorsteps the next with a set under their arms. Bernard Jones, the Just Rentals chairman, said: "They're all nice lads and everyone at the company is very proud of them." Jenkins, reputed to be on a salary of £100,000 with the company, is now tipped to become rugby's first millionaire.

Taking care

August 31 is the cut-off point for manufacturers of protective rugby clothing and headgear who may be hoping to secure the International Rugby Board's (IRB) seal of approval. After that date, nothing that has not been tested, passed and officially stamped will be permissible during games. The IRB says that it is taking action because individual unions have been unable to police their own players.

MARK SOUSTER

Simon Barnes reflects on the retirement of one of the greatest icons of American sport

Jordan calls time on brilliant career

The great ships hung motionless in the sky, over every nation on earth. Motionless they hung, huge, heavy, steady in the sky, a blasphemy against nature. Many people went straight into shock as their minds tried to encompass what they were looking at. The ships hung in the sky in much the same way that bricks don't.

These words, describing the arrival of the Vogon starships in *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, will do very well to describe Michael Jordan in his pomp. He hung in the air in much the same way that people don't.

There is a basketball term that was more or less invented for Jordan: hang-time. It was described with sober seriousness, basketball being a serious pursuit: you have to triple-team Jordan when playing defense against him, because of his great hang-time.

The term refers to the length of time that Jordan is able to remain suspended at the apex of his jump. So try it. Try to measure the hang-time of yourself, or a brick. It doesn't work, does it? There is no such thing as hang-time. You go up, you come down.

Slow dissolve to Chicago, in June 1993. Final seconds of a National Basket Association finals game between Chicago Bulls, otherwise known as Team Jordan, and the Phoenix Suns. A steal: give it to Michael. The polished, sweat-anointed dome of the brown head, the arachnoid limbs, the charge into the heart of the defence; the fake, the other fake, the soaring leap.

"Sir" Charles Barkley, his chief opponent, gave him a shove as he took off. The blow, sweetly-timed, twisted Jordan round through 180 degrees in the air. He was out of control, giddy, off balance, uncertain of his exact location.

Well, he should have been, but, soaring backwards, he reached up to plop the ball nonchalantly into the basket before landing in a sprawl of limbs. Up he got, to take the free throw for Barkley's foul: the ball hit nothing but net.

Grace, skill and the most colossal will to win. In short, the complete package. Now Jordan has retired and the question must be asked: will we ever see his like again? The chances are pretty remote.

How many Bradmans have we had in cricket? How many Pelés have we had in football? How many Muhammad Alis have we had in life? We must put Jordan in that category. In this country, we don't really understand basketball, we only really know about the Jordan as a cultural and fiscal phenomenon. His impact on the United States economy has been estimated at $10 billion. He is an icon for the United States, living proof that Everything in America is All Right. How can there be anything wrong with a society that produces Michael "Air" Jordan?

Car registration M AIR J. A nickname invented not by his clamorous public but by the company whose plimsolls he wears. Perhaps the most recognisable face on the planet — but in this country we know nothing about the player.

And in sport, truth is only found when the ball is live. Back to Chicago in 1993. Jordan was 30 then. The sainted image had been tainted with stories of his taste for high-stakes golf. Chicago had just lost game three to Sir Charles's boys. Jordan was criticised for trying too hard.

He was tired. He was taking too much on. He had lost his edge. It was all over. Columnists sharpened up their obituaries.

Come game four, with the wrong-way basket and so on. Jordan scored 55 points out of 111. Phil Westphal, the opposing coach, said that he wasn't surprised. "I'm amazed, but I'm not surprised." He added significantly: "He inflicted his will on us."

Jordan transformed American basketball from a game struggling to rise from its recent sleazy past into the hottest property in American sport and, therefore, in world sport. The introduction of professional basketball at the Olympic Games — the Dream Team — was an aspect of the Jordan phenomenon.

Jordan did not rise to prominence with his wit and wisdom. He tended to utter appropriate role-model banalities, but always with perfect manners, airy charm. No, it was only when the ball was live that you got the measure of the man.

George Best's marker was taken off, according to Best's pal, Paddy Crerand, "suffering from twisted blood". But has there ever in sport been a worse job than marking Jordan? Nick Anderson, of Orlando Magic, described his own experience. "You been to hell before? You don't want to go."

Jordan even managed to pull off every superstar's impossible goal: coming back. Jordan took 18 months off to try to be a baseball player, having gone as far as he could, he said, in basketball. After all, he had led Chicago to three successive NBA titles, the third in that June of 1993. It seems that Jordan found baseball failure oddly therapeutic. In March 1995, he rejoined Chicago Bulls. And once again, Team Jordan won the NBA championship three times in a row. Then came the dispute between team owners and players and Jordan, not wishing to let down the boys, waited until the deal was struck before announcing his retirement: a graceful exit.

A decent chap — but the hell with decent chaps. In sport, it is action that fires the imagination. Hang-time is an illusion based on extraordinary athleticism. Let us relish the realities. Trade-mark move: the no-look pass. In basketball, more than most ball games, you read intentions by reading eyes. Jordan could and often did pass while looking in the opposite direction. Another trade-mark move: fake right, go right.

Vignette: Chicago against Utah Jazz, NBA Finals 1997. Last second of the game, Jordan with the ball. The defense triple-teamed him, to stop the inevitable Jordan charge. Instead, the utterly unexpected flip to Steve Kerr, who scored and settled the championship.

Vignette two: NBA final 1998, same championship, same situation. Same result, different route. Jordan crashed through the lot to score. It was his last touch in professional basketball.

An American asked if I enjoyed my time in Chicago. Sure I did, it's always great to see sport played at that level.

"You mean that level above the ground?" Yes. Jordan could leap far above the earth. And stay there. Hang-time; it's all about hang-time.

Jordan celebrates after the Bulls' defeat of the Utah Jazz to clinch the 1998 NBA championship, his last appearance on a basketball court



Hang-time: Jordan makes one of his trademark leaps, above, and, right, practises his batting during an unsuccessful switch to baseball

CAN BASKETBALL BOUNCE BACK?

UNSCIENTIFIC polls on the [illegible] a knack of getting to the heart [illegible] momentous matters and a [illegible] on the CNN/*Sports Illustrated* [illegible] no different [illegible] Within hours of the revelation [illegible] Jordan will be announcing his [illegible] today, nearly [illegible] whether the National Basketball Association (NBA) [illegible] without him. [illegible]

The question [illegible] would be [illegible] Jordan's [illegible] been the [illegible] more — [illegible] would have [illegible] Seldom can [illegible] have depended [illegible]

Few observers were taken [illegible] David Stern, the NBA commissioner [illegible] appealed to Jordan to play [illegible] within minutes of concluding the [illegible] ended the lockout. Stern knew [illegible] doing. The game has been [illegible] tawdry dispute, one that pitted [illegible] players against their plutocratic [illegible] few days. [illegible]

HOW MICHAEL JORDAN HIT THE HEIGHTS

With 29,227 points Jordan is the third highest scorer in NBA history behind Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Wilt Chamberlain and holds the record for leading the league in scoring in ten seasons.

He was voted the NBA's most valuable player five times (1988, 1991, 1992, 1996, 1998).

He won the NBA championship six times with Chicago Bulls (1991, 1992, 1993, 1996, 1997, 1998) and on each occasion he wasvoted most valuable player.

He was voted NBA rookie of the year in 1984-85.

He made [illegible] appearances in the NBA all-star game, twice being named most valuable player.

Once scored a record 63 points in a play-off game against Boston Celtics.

His salary of $35 million made him the highest-paid sportsman in the world.

The inscription on Jordan's statue outside the United Center in Chicago reads: "Best there ever was, best there ever will be."

SNOW REPORTS

SKI CLUB

	Depth (cm) L	Depth (cm) U	Piste	Conditions Runs to Resort	Off/p	Weather (5pm)	°C	Last snow
Andorra								
Soldeu	80	100	Good	Open	Powder	Fine	-6	10/01
Austria								
Kitzbuhel	20	79	Fair	Open	Powder	Fair	-3	12/01
Obergurgl	50	200	Good	Open	Powder	Fine	-6	11/01
Soll	20	70	Good	Open	Powder	Snow	-2	12/01
Canada								
Lake Louise	105	125	Good	Open	Varied	Snow	0	12/01
France								
Alpe d'Huez	60	160	Good	Open	Varied	Fair	-9	12/01
Argentiere	60	180	Good	Open	Powder	Fine	-10	12/01
Avoriaz	90	110	Good	Open	Powder	Snow	-8	12/01
Flaine	70	190	Good	Open	Varied	Fine	-9	12/01
La Clusaz	35	120	Good	Open	Varied	Fair	-4	12/01
La Plagne	70	160	Good	Open	Powder	Sun	-10	12/01
La Tania	65	105	Good	Open	Powder	Fair	-5	12/01
Les Arcs	50	172	Good	Artificial	Powder	Cloud	-7	12/01
Megève	30	90	Good	Artificial	Powder	Fair	-3	12/01
Méribel	40	110	Good	Open	Powder	Cloud	-7	12/01
Tignes	70	160	Good	Open	Powder	Sun	-8	12/01
Val Thorens	60	120	Good	Open	Powder	Fine	-13	11/01
Val d'Isère	68	150	Good	Icy	Powder	Fine	-11	11/01
Italy								
Cervinia	45	160	Good	Hard	Powder	Fine	-3	11/01
Cortina	50	90	Good	Open	Powder	Cloud	-7	12/01
Norway								
Geilo	60	60	Good	Open	Varied	Fair	-17	07/01
Switzerland								
Crans Montana	20	65	Good	Open	Varied	Cloud	-6	11/01
Klosters	45	135	Good	Open	Powder	Fair	-5	12/01
Saas Fee	65	240	Good	Open	Powder	Fair	-4	12/01
St Moritz	60	100	Good	Some	Powder	Sun	-2	11/01
Verbier	15	145	Good	Open	Powder	Cloud	-6	11/01
Villars	30	90	Good	Closed	Varied	Fair	-5	11/01
United States								
Aspen	60	83	Good	Open	Varied	Fine	-8	12/01
Deer Valley	77	85	Good	Open	Varied	Cloud	-1	08/01

http://www.skiclub.co.uk L = lower slopes. U = upper slopes

Britons' desert adventure ends

The Dakar Rally is an unforgiving taskmaster. Mel Webb reports

IN THE desert, small headaches become huge, virtually insurmountable problems. With birds of prey circling overhead, mere survival becomes a victory in itself. At times such as these, it does not matter that you are a military man, highly trained and superbly fit. In the desert, even men of iron can be reduced to straw. The Dakar Rally takes no prisoners.

It was with a keen sense of anticipation and, they thought, unquenchable optimism that Darren Bidwell and Paul Gower left Granada, in Spain, at the start of this year's Dakar Rally. Ahead of them lay 5,600 miles across some of the toughest terrain on earth, but they believed that they could do it. Less than a week later, they were out of the rally, beaten but not broken by the sands.

Bidwell, like his team-mate, a bombardier in the Royal Artillery and a member of The Flying Gunners, the regiment's motorcycle display team, was the first to go — and his downfall was caused by nothing more crucial than a lost petrol cap.

He was preparing to embark on the fifth leg of the rally, a 390-mile stage between Bir Mogrein to Atar in Mauritania, and was queueing patiently for fuel when, without warning, the fuel tanker decamped and headed for the rally-supporting helicopters. What had been an organised queue became a disorganised rabble and, in the hullaballoo, Bidwell lost his fuel cap.

He was understandably unwilling to bodge the job and an appeal to borrow a cap from two riders who were already out of the event fell on unsympathetically stony ground. By the time that Bidwell located a spare cap, he was lagging behind the four-wheel-drive vehicles. Faced by the prospect of having his air filter and his lungs filled with dust, he tried to accelerate past them, but succeeded only in taking a tumble from his KTM. It was the beginning of the end.

He was still in the race when night fell, but had 65 miles of dunes to cover. Short of energy and time, he reluctantly had to accept that, for him, the race was probably over. A night in the dunes was the only option and he watched as the sun came up and the buzzards came to call.

Bidwell was eventually rescued, leaving Gower as the team's standard-bearer, but within 24 hours his pilgrimage had come to an end as well. During the 285 miles between Atar and Tidjikja, he hit a huge, half-hidden rock. He took a tumble, but just as damaging was the fact that he fractured a fuel line.

The plucky Gower tried to press on, but was becoming more and more dehydrated, which led to more falls and, with the electric starter on his his huge 660cc machine having broken, he had to contend with kick-starting it. Desperately weakened, he had to pull out at the next check point.

As both riders, none the worse for the rigours of their epic adventure, rested alongside Captain Dave Mackay, their commanding officer, and Sergeant John Bangs, their mechanic, back at their Woolwich base this week, it was time to reflect. "I don't think we could have done anything differently," Mackay said. "We are disappointed, but we are proud of what we achieved. It was an experience we will remember for the rest of our lives."

So, too, with a modicum of luck, will John Deacon, Britain's most experienced Dakar hand. In his fifth rally, Deacon was in eighth place overall after the eleventh stage yesterday from Timbuktu to Nema. The rally ends on Sunday and those who make it to Dakar will have the satisfaction of knowing that they have taken on the forces of nature — and won.

MOTOR RACING

Walkinshaw keeps charge of Arrows

By Kevin Eason

TOM WALKINSHAW has hung on to control of his Arrows Formula One team with backing from a Nigerian prince and a leading City finance house. The team was thought to be a target for sale, possibly to German bidders.

However, Walkinshaw announced yesterday that he was forming a new consortium with Prince Malik Ado Ibrahim and Morgan Grenfell Private Equity, which will value the Arrows business at £110 million. Walkinshaw retains 25 per cent of the business as well as the chairmanship.

The deal means that Arrows, with around 200 jobs, will stay in Great Britain, while the partnership brings City money into a business that is traditionally dominated by sponsorship from cigarette companies. Arrows was one of the few teams without a tobacco sponsor, but it relied heavily on Danka, an electronics business in the United States. Danka ran into financial problems last year, leaving Walkinshaw to seek *sponsorship*.

The relationship also brings an intriguing new personality into Formula One in Prince Malik. The prince, 38, is the third son of a Nigerian tribal king and was educated in Britain. He has become a leading player in Nigerian telecommunications, has brokered the deal for Proton, of Malaysia, to buy the Lotus cars business in Britain and was apparently the inspiration behind the Arrows deal.

He said: "This partnership will provide long-term viability for a team with extraordinary untapped potential."

Rushden goalkeeper arrives at Elland Road via Las Vegas

Feuer relishes his unexpected spell in the limelight

By Richard Hobson

IAN FEUER is one member of the Rushden and Diamonds side who will not be starstruck by the bright lights and packed stands at Elland Road tonight. After a childhood mingling in the company of A-list celebrities, an evening with Lucas Radebe and Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink is unlikely to provoke an outbreak of goosepimples.

Jet-skiing with Diana Ross on the Queen of Motown's private water near Lake Tahoe remains just one memory of his formative years in the United States, yet, if the lifestyle of his Las Vegas youth seems to be a world away from an FA Cup third-round replay against Leeds United in the cold of Yorkshire, then, Feuer has no regrets about taking the family name into another branch of the entertainment industry.

He has quite an act to follow. Ron, his father, Ron, is a keyboard player who lined up in backing bands for Ross, Elvis Presley and Paul Anka and now makes records of his own. Rusty, his mother, trod the boards as a showgirl on the biggest stages in Vegas, helping to open evenings for the likes of Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr. She now runs her own agency.

For eight years, Debbie, a sister, was better known as Mrs Mickey Rourke, having married and divorced one of Hollywood's most charismatic actors, the star of *9½ Weeks*. His second sister owns an art gallery in Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills, while his two brothers play in the rock group Fifth Dimension.

Feuer, 27, said: "It was a pretty nomadic childhood because, when I was on vacation from school, my dad would take me with him on tours with people like Diana Ross, so I got to see a lot of America. At that age, I did not realise people like Sinatra were major stars. They were just people who were around.

"The problem with being a kid in Las Vegas is that everything is geared towards people over 18. Otherwise, there is not a lot to do. Basically, everybody used to have house parties and I suppose where Diana Ross was concerned the house was bigger than usual. I have a photograph at home of me as a kid in a wetsuit with her in the background. I used to like going around because of the terrific barbecues and the lake."

Despite achieving a reasonable level of competence on the piano, his own ambitions soon



swung towards football. Showtime came to mean televised coverage of English football in bars. The family moved to California when he was 15 and soon after joining Los Angeles Salsa — a football club, not a dance troupe — he decided to try his luck in Europe.

Five years in Belgium preceded his arrival at West Ham United, but he struggled to break into the first team and moved to Luton Town. He left Kenilworth Road last summer for New England Revolution, the Major League Soccer side based in Boston, only to lose his place when Walter Zenga, the former Italy goalkeeper, arrived as player-coach.

Rushden had injuries to both their goalkeepers and offered a one-month loan while he sought a bigger club in England. "I did not realise how much I love this country until I went back to the States," he said.

The loan expires at the weekend, just as the Conference side are enjoying their own period of fame and Feuer, outstanding in the 0-0 draw against Leeds at Nene Park, is sifting through offers to stay in England. If nothing else, he has inherited his parents' sense of timing.

Even though the Northamptonshire club declined to accept its full entitlement of 4,300 tickets, about 3,000 supporters will make the 150-mile journey north tonight, nearly half of them in 30 official coaches. That is still 400 more than the average home attendance and David Joyce, the secretary, has heard talk of little else in the villages of Rushden and Irthlingborough.

Brian Talbot, the head coach, is playing down the prospects of his team, despite the fact that Leeds may have to press Radebe into service ahead of schedule after a knee injury because of a shortage of defenders.

Jonathon Woodgate is also very doubtful with a thigh strain, leaving David O'Leary, the Leeds manager, with only one recognised central defender, David Wetherall.

"I don't know when our injury jinx is going to let up and leave us alone," O'Leary said, "but we've an exciting cup-tie and we've got to show that we can cope with this crisis that has hit us."

Talbot said: "Leeds should have too much class and ability, but, if we can keep them out, we might get something on the counter," he said.

Feuer has a less tactical approach. "Let's just go out there and enjoy it," he said. "It's going to be a great game."



Talbot is playing down Rushden's chances of staging an FA Cup upset against Leeds

TENNIS

Rusedski goes back to gym after early loss

By Alix Ramsay

ANOTHER week, another tournament and another first-round loss — it was not quite the start to the year that Greg Rusedski had in mind. Yesterday at the Sydney International, it was Gustavo Kuerten's turn to put the Great Britain No 2's nose out of joint, surviving a first-set pasting by Rusedski before winning 1-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Kuerten is known as a giant-killer, coming from nowhere to win the French Open, his first tournament title, two years ago. For the next year, he faded from view, but towards the end of last summer he found his touch again to win a further two titles.

Even so, Rusedski could have done without another setback so close to the Australian Open — not that he was letting on. "There's really nothing to be down about," he said. "Kuerten just played a great match."

After his defeat last week to Bernd Karbacher, the world No 124, Rusedski is now somewhat short of match-practice before the start of the first grand-slam tournament of the season — and Rusedski is a man who needs matches under his belt. Playing eight of the final ten weeks of last season, he was getting better and better, a run that led to his first Mercedes Super Nine title, beating Pete Sampras in the final of the Paris indoor event. Give the man a holiday, however, and it takes a long time to get back up to speed.

The loss has sent Rusedski scurrying back to the gym and the practice courts in an attempt to kick-start the competitive juices. Having dominated the first set, he began to wilt as the match wore on and he is determined to be physically sharper before moving on to Melbourne.

"It was one of those matches where I played better than last week but just lost," he said. Rusedski was in good company as Pat Rafter, the US Open champion, also fell at the first hurdle. He, too, improves only through sheer hard graft. Beaten by Lleyton Hewitt, the young pretender to Rafter's position of Australia's favourite son, Rafter was outplayed 7-6, 6-1. "I was definitely underdone," he confessed.

What awaits Petr Korda in Melbourne is anybody's guess. More and more players are expressing anything from concern to outright anger that Korda has not been suspended after he provided a positive drugs test at Wimbledon last year. Rumours continue to fly and a players' boycott of the Open has been mooted. While that is unlikely, they will certainly have their say at a pre-tournament meeting at the



Rusedski: bad start to year

weekend. Korda, who looked nervous and edgy last week in Qatar, has announced that he will definitely defend his Australian Open title and, still proclaiming his innocence, will say his piece at the players' meeting.

"I will stand in front of the players. I do not have any problem to stand in front of anybody," he said. "I wanted to play in Australia because I haven't done anything. Why should I hide? I want to show the world I am still capable of playing tennis and I want to defend my title as well as I can."

United dampen Keane's desire

By Stephen Wood and Russell Kempson

ROY KEANE, the Manchester United midfield player, could be disappointed in his attempts to secure a swift resolution to the subject of his future at Old Trafford. Keane, whose contract expires at the end of the 1999-2000 season, has expressed his desire to arrange another, long-term deal immediately. Keane is also believed to be demanding a pay rise, taking his wages to around £40,000 a week.

However, Martin Edwards, the United chief executive, confirmed yesterday that the club did not want to alter its usual procedure over new contract negotiations. United open talks with players no more than 12 months before their contract is due for renewal.

"Roy still has 18 months to run on his present contract," Edwards said. "I am surprised that there is speculation already and there are no thoughts at the moment to bringing these talks forward.

"The timing is very important, because we feel that contract discussions can be disruptive. We want players to concentrate on football and the proper time to sit down with Roy will be the summer."

Keane has said that if the situation is not sorted out to his satisfaction, he could leave the club in the summer of 2000. That would mean that, with Keane a free agent, United would receive nothing if he was transferred to another club. If United met Keane's financial demands, however, their wage structure would be broken, a risk that they are not prepared to take.

The FA Premier League is waiting for United to send it a full report into events on Sunday, when a power failure delayed the kick-off of the FA Carling Premiership match with West Ham United by 45 minutes. Old Trafford staff have begun inquiries into the incident, although they do not anticipate completing deliberations before the weekend. They have been told already that the North Stand cannot be reopened until they have proved that it is safe for supporters.

Chelsea's determination to hang on to their lead in the FA Carling Premiership stepped up a gear yesterday when it was revealed that they have made an enquiry for Gilles de Bilde, the Belgium striker, who plays for PSV Eindhoven. Gianluca Vialli, the Chelsea manager, is keen to add to his squad after a series of injuries has left him with a lack of cover, especially up front.

Chelsea would prefer the move to be on a loan basis until the end of the season, with an option to buy if it proves successful, but PSV are more interested in a permanent deal and are seeking about £3.5 million for De Bilde.

Keane hopes to secure a new contract in the near future

SPORT IN BRIEF

Rios pulls out of Auckland event

■ TENNIS: Marcelo Rios, the men's world No 2, dropped out of the Heineken Open in Auckland yesterday, just 46 minutes into his first-round match. The Chilean, seeded No 1, suffered a recurrence of the back injury that troubled him at the end of last year and his preparation for the Australian Open, the first grand-slam tournament of the year, which starts next week, is in jeopardy. Rios won the first set of his match with Andre Pavel, of Romania, 7-5, but his service was broken early in the second game, when he failed to chase a ball on break point, and he withdrew to the dressing-room to receive treatment. Rios has never won a grand-slam title.

K Club the Ryder choice

■ **GOLF: The European Ryder Cup committee is expected to confirm this week that the 2005 Cup will be hosted by the K Club in Straffan, Co Kildare. The K Club will not receive official confirmation of the decision until a press conference on Friday, but a source said that other clubs in Ireland had been told that they would not be chosen for the biennial event between Europe and the United States. Jefferson Smurfit plc, the K Club's owners, declined to comment.**

Smethwick sign Wasim

■ CRICKET: Smethwick, of the Birmingham Premier League, who usually attract around 100 spectators for home matches, have signed Wasim Akram, the Pakistan captain, as their overseas professional. John Lumb, the Smethwick chairman, said: "He will have an enormous impact on the league and the city with its strong multi-racial community."

Africans go for glory

■ **ATHLETICS: Daniel Komen and Haile Gebrselassie will swap distances in a bid to break each other's world indoor records at the BUPA Indoor Grand Prix in Birmingham on February 14. Komen, of Kenya, runs in the 2,000 metres and Gebrselassie, of Ethiopia, will attempt to break Komen's 5,000 metres record.**

Henman's London date

■ TENNIS: Tim Henman, the world No 7, has joined Greg Rusedski, his British compatriot, in confirming that he will play in the Guardian Direct Cup in Battersea Park next month. Other leading players taking part in the ATP tournament, from February 22 to 28, include Richard Krajicek, a former Wimbledon winner, and Cedric Pioline, of France.

Murdoch is fan of Blatter proposal

By Our Sports Staff

[L]EADING officials of Uefa, [th]e European football union, [rej]ected the plan to stage the [W]orld Cup every two years [ye]sterday, saying that it would [ha]ve "negative consequences". [Th]e plan, put forward by Sepp [Bl]atter, the president of Fifa, [th]e game's governing body, [di]d receive support, however, [fro]m a more unlikely source — [Ru]pert Murdoch.

Murdoch, the chairman [an]d chief executive of News [Co]rporation, the parent com[pa]ny of *The Times*, was full of [en]thusiasm for the suggestion. "My first reaction to that is [it's] a very good idea," Murdo[ch], speaking at a forum on [me]dia in the 21st century, said. [I] think the World Cup is a [gre]at international event and [the]re's no reason why it [wo]uld not be staged every [sec]ond year.

"If we don't have a World [Cu]p between countries every [two] years, maybe it would be [rig]ht to have, in between the [qua]drennial World Cup, a [Wo]rld Cup of clubs."

He added: "Certainly, foot[bal]l is so strong and so popu[lar] in so many parts of the [wo]rld that we should see [ma]jor international competi[tion] more than every four [yea]rs. I would agree with [tha]t."

However, in a statement, [Ue]fa "not only objected to the [ide]a, but also condemned the [wa]y the project was presented, [wit]hout prior consultation of [any] of the relevant bodies".

Uefa and Lennart Johansson, its president, has been critical of Blatter's plan since he floated it last weekend. Its six top officials are "of the opinion that the project would produce negative consequences in sporting, medical and commercial contexts and have a damaging effect on domestic competitions".

Blatter said that staging the World Cup every two years would boost national teams, which, he argued, had been threatened by proposals for a breakaway league of top European clubs.

Uefa countered that by saying "there are other ways" of strengthening national teams and soccer associations. Its presidential board "noted with regret signs that the project could be a matter of personal prestige".

Fifa's Strategic Studies Committee, which can propose changes to international competitions and which is chaired by Blatter, is likely to discuss the idea this month.

Fifa has taken a step towards clearing the way to a biennial World Cup by announcing a plan to harmonise the international football calendar. A meeting will be held in Zurich on Friday with a view to reschedule continental tournaments, such as the European championship, the Copa America and the African Nations' Cup, which, at present, are held in different cycles.

Goram goes to Fir Park

By Phil Gordon

ANDY GORAM, the former Scotland goalkeeper, listened to the voice of reason for once in his turbulent career yesterday and joined Motherwell, the Scottish Premier League club, until the end of the season.

Goram, 34, had been offered a short-term contract by Billy Davies, the Fir Park manager, just two months ago, but resisted in order to pursue an adventure with Brian Laudrup, his former Rangers colleague, at FC Copenhagen. The Danish club ultimately passed over the talented but tempestuous Goram, who earned 42 caps for Scotland until his walk-out on the eve of the World Cup finals last June and subsequent retirement from international football.

"I will not be using Motherwell as a stepping stone," Goram insisted yesterday. "There is a verbal agreement for a further two-year contract if things go well and, hopefully, they will."

Goram, who spent seven years at Ibrox, spent two months at Sheffield United, of the Nationwide League first division, earlier in the season.

Oldham lose chairman

By Stephen Wood

IAN STOTT resigned yesterday as chairman of Oldham Athletic, the Nationwide League second division club, in the wake of his claims that they were considering a merger with two other clubs in the North West.

Stott was reported last week to have opened talks with the chairmen of Bury and Rochdale, with a view to forming one club — possibly called Manchester North End — in the millennium. Terry Robinson, the chairman of Bury, and David Kilpatrick, the chairman of Rochdale, both played down the idea and, after an emergency board meeting at Oldham, Stott resigned. David Brierley, the vice-chairman, replaces him, with Stott remaining on the board as Brierley's deputy.

Stott, who took over as chairman in 1982, admitted that he had put Oldham in a difficult position. He said: "I felt I had inadvertently embarrassed the club to such an extent that it would be in everyone's interests if I stepped down."

The story brought an instant backlash from Oldham supporters and Brierley was eager to set the record straight on the issue. "I can assure everyone that we have no intention of seeking a merger with any other clubs — now or in the future."

Stott will now concentrate on his attempts to become the new chairman of the Football Association. He declared his availability last week, although recent events at Oldham will hardly cement his chances of succeeding Keith Wiseman, the former chairman. The FA Council will decide on a new man at the end of the season.

Arnar Gunnlaugsson, the Bolton Wanderers striker, has handed in a transfer request, prompting Colin Todd, his manager, to accuse him of acting out of "pure greed". After months of uncertainty, Gunnlaugsson, the Iceland international, has turned down a new contract to stay with the first division club. There has been interest in the player, who has scored 14 goals this season, from Leicester City and Nottingham Forest, the FA Carling Premiership clubs, although Bolton's valuation of around £3.5 million could put any suitors off.

Walter Smith, the manager of Everton, is considering recalling John Spencer from his loan spell at Motherwell, the Scottish Premier League club. Spencer accused Smith of not giving him a chance to prove himself at Goodison Park, but Everton are struggling to score and Smith needs all possible options available to him in attack.

CRICKET

Making the most of a worthless exercise

Michael Henderson reports from Melbourne on the merit of England's successive one-day wins

THE triangular one-day competition, in which England are pitted against Australia and Sri Lanka, is of no great significance. It is a bloated enterprise, which will not be resolved until two of the teams play off against each other in three "finals" next month. They love this sort of thing here because it brings in sacks of dollars, but that does not mean it is important.

So far as England are concerned — and the others as well — the only relevance it may have is as an indicator, with the World Cup four months away, but that is a bit of a red herring. The World Cup will be played in England, where pitches are different to Australia at the height of summer. It is really no sort of indicator at all.

The benefits that England can accrue from this unnecessarily long tournament are those that normally come from winning matches. It is better than losing them, so, although David Lloyd and his players are pleased to have won their first two games, beating Australia and Sri Lanka in the humidity of Brisbane, there is no danger of them thinking that they have done anything worth writing home about.

It gives the players the chance to work together and Lloyd, the England coach, knows that there is plenty of work to do, particularly on their fielding. "Mobility in the field is vitally important," Lloyd said. "We want people who can get to the ball quickly, get it in quickly and knock the stumps out of the ground. Fielding in one-day cricket is hard work and requires tremendous concentration. We are getting better, but there is more to do."

Lloyd would not be drawn on Sri Lanka's go-slow bowling policy on Sunday night, when Ranatunga, their captain, seemed to be intent on trying to prevent the England batsmen from gaining any momentum.

"If they slow down the tempo," Lloyd said, "then we must pick it up. We have to combat what they are trying to do." Evidently, there is not much love lost between the England coach and the folk who run the Sri Lanka team.

The first victory in Brisbane owed a lot to Alan Mullally's bowling, the second to Neil Fairbrother's batting. Six months ago, neither man would have put much money on the likelihood of his playing in the World Cup. Now they will both be involved even if, in Fairbrother's case, Graham Thorpe regains full match-fitness before the end of next month, when England must announce their 15-man party.

It is a big "if". Privately, England have given up hope of Thorpe declaring his availability. His back complaint requires a much longer period of recuperation than the next chapter of the England story will allow. Better by far that he has a good long rest and comes back into the Test team fully recovered and hungry for cricket. He has played a lot of it in the past ten years. The break may do him good.

Fairbrother's Test days are behind him, but his contribution to the one-day team has not been finally measured. So far, with innings of 47 and 67 not out, he has justified his recall and, as Lloyd said of the man who was initially Thorpe's "shadow", "he is now the man in possession".

Most of the players "in possession" will remain there. England may not know the precise composition of the team that will start the World Cup, there has been too much chopping and changing in the past year for anybody to state it with conviction, but something is taking shape, if only because some players have been banished to the outer rings of possibility.

Nevertheless, it seems strange that Alistair Brown, the hard-hitting Surrey opener, is no longer a contender, given the damaging nature of his batting in limited-overs cricket, but there it is.

Knight and Stewart will open, with Hick and Fairbrother to follow at four and five, and Adam Hollioake at No 6. His brother, Ben, given every chance to make an unassailable case for selection, has fallen by the wayside. The problem of finding somebody to bat first wicket down is no nearer resolution.

If the selectors feel that Vince Wells, of Leicestershire, is a genuine contender for that position, then they should sit down for a long time in a darkened room. Nor is it entirely clear what Mark Alleyne, the Gloucestershire captain, is doing here.

These men have been around for years. To what do they owe this sudden promotion, other than being "good sorts", who can bowl a bit?

IAN WALDIE



Mullally and Fairbrother, below, have made the most of their opportunities to shine



India make hard work of victory

By Our Sports Staff

NAPIER (India won toss): India beat New Zealand by two wickets

INDIA made heavy work of a modest target in the second one-day international yesterday of their series against New Zealand, but they managed to eke out a narrow win with one ball to spare. The victory that brought the five-match series level at 1-1.

Chasing a disappointing New Zealand total of 213, Sachin Tendulkar and Saurav Ganguly gave India a fine start, plundering 50 from the first eight overs. However, the loss of Tendulkar, caught at slip off Nash for 23, slowed the momentum and, once Ganguly had followed for 38, wickets fell regularly.

New Zealand, indebted to a second-wicket partnership of 76 between Horne and McMillan that kept their innings on track, suffered the loss of Geoff Allott from their attack after bowling six balls, but Vettori's careful spin bowling kept them in the hunt. Run-outs cost the home side dearly, with five batsmen perishing to that manner.

India, who lost the Test series 1-0, were relieved to return to winning form, even if they were taken to the final over. Eight runs were required from it, but a streaky four by Kumble off the third ball virtually settled the issue.

SCOREBOARD FROM NAPIER

NEW ZEALAND	
M J Horne lbw b Tendulkar	61
B A Young run out	4
C D McMillan c Mongia b Singh	28
R G Twose run out	3
C L Cairns c Prasad b Kumble	44
†A C Parore st Mongia b Tendulkar	7
*D J Nash run out	4
C Z Harris run out	15
D L Vettori run out	1
G R Larsen st Mongia b Tendulkar	12
G I Allott not out	7
Extras (lb 9, w 14, nb 4)	27
Total (49.3 overs)	**213**

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-6, 2-82, 3-88, 4-157, 5-166, 6-175, 7-179, 8-194, 9-197

BOWLING: Srinath 9-0-45-0; Prasad 5-2-14-0; Kumble 10-0-38-1; Singh 6-0-33-1; Tendulkar 8.3-0-34-3; Ganguly 2-0-13-0; Chopra 9-1-27-0

INDIA	
S C Ganguly c Parore b Nash	38
S R Tendulkar c Young b Nash	23
R Dravid c Parore b Vettori	38
*M Azharuddin c Parore b Larsen	7
A Jadeja run out	26
R R Singh c Horne b Vettori	23
†N R Mongia not out	30
J Srinath run out	7
N Chopra run out	7
A Kumble not out	6
Extras (b 1, lb 4, w 2, nb 2)	9
Total (8 wkts, 49.5 overs)	**214**

B K V Prasad did not bat

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-50, 2-81, 3-91, 4-122, 5-152, 6-164, 7-182, 8-204

BOWLING: Cairns 10-0-37-0; Allott 2.2-0-21-0; McMillan 0.4-0-5-0; Nash 9.5-0-43-2; Harris 10-3-27-0; Larsen 10-1-44-1; Vettori 7-1-32-2.

Umpires: R S Dunne and C E King.

Answers from page 38

PINDA

(b) The ground-nut or peanut. "In the valleys of the Red River of Louisiana and Texas are to be found negroes who use many African words, the inheritance of their ancestors. A white man is a 'buckra'. A ground-nut (peanut) is a 'pinda'."

RICASSO

(b) The part of the blade of a sword that is next to the hilt. The Italian word. "The use of the ricasso to obtain a better grip on the sword had led to the introduction of loops, rings and bars attached to the hilt."

OCOTILLO

(b) A spiny shrub, Fouquiera splendens, of the family Fouquieraceae, native to the north-western United States and Mexico, and bearing narrow inconspicuous leaves and panicles of red flowers. American Spanish diminutive of ocote, which is a resinous Mexican pine. " 'You know the ocotillo,' Ben said, pointing out the cactus that looks like five or six spiny, 10-foot pieces of rope snaking up into the air."

REVERDIE

(b) In medieval French lyric poetry: a song which celebrates the reappearance of spring. "The Dark Days are By, In March 1940, he uses the simplest and barest of words to convey the mood of a traditional reverdie."

SOLUTION TO WINNING CHESS MOVE

1. Qxg6! and if 1. . . . hxg6: 2. Rh8 is mate.

TELEVISION CHOICE

The female prerogative

Battle of the Sexes
BBC2, 8.00pm

The theme of this second report on sex in the animal world is fussy females. Since they bear the burden of breeding it is not unreasonable that they should be choosy about their partners. To illustrate this proposition the cameras travel to Costa Rica, Uganda, the Mediterranean and Papua New Guinea, providing copious and varied examples of how females select their mate. For female royal terns the male has to prove himself adept at catching the fish that will fill mouths, while male weaver birds must be good nest builders. But the most demanding of female birds is the long-tailed mannakin. She makes her prospective partners dance for hours before deciding which one of more than 40 to mate with.

Wing and a Prayer
Channel 5, 8.00pm

The legal drama deservedly returns for a second series, soon to lose one of its main characters but bolstered by the arrival of two new ones. Curiously, since Matthew Hall, who created the show and writes several of the episodes, is a former barrister, the one weakness of the show is the artificiality of the courtroom dialogue. Real witnesses are seldom as expansive and outspoken as they are here, though this undoubtedly adds to the exchanges. But the juggling of the lawyers' professional and private lives is as deft as ever and gives the narrative pace, texture and variety. As for personnel changes, Kate Buffery's Amanda Dankwith, QC, the head of Salthouse Chambers, is about to vacate the post to take a fraud case in the smoke. This opens the way for a newcomer, played by Maureen Beattie, while Dominic Mafham joins the cast as a younger lawyer.

Mersey Blues
BBC2, 9.00pm

Jenny Crowther's documentary about Merseyside Police has already made news for an incident in which a senior detective filmed for the series is arrested and charged with corruption. But there is no hint of this in the opening programme, which shows a force fighting an uphill battle against organised crime against a background of financial crisis. Nearly £20 million has to be trimmed from the budget in three years. For the Drug Squad, the focus of tonight's episode, this means no money for the overtime which inevitably results from short staffing. The officers agree to "do it for the Queen", to work the extra hours for nothing. But this may not last and one detective says morale is the lowest he has known. It is significant that the new head of the squad has little drug-busting experience but a reputation for looking after the pennies.

Rocco Forte features in the first of a new series, *Blood on the Carpet* (BBC2, 9.50pm)

Blood on the Carpet
BBC2, 9.50pm

A series about business battles gets off to a rattling start by recalling Granada's acrimonious takeover of the Forte hotel and catering empire. The film is enriched by extensive interviews with the two leading players. Sir Rocco Forte is the son of Sir Charles, who started with a single milk bar and was still guiding the company in his eighties. Against the gentlemanly grouse-shooting Rocco is pitched Gerry Robinson, from an Irish working-class background and known for ruthless cost-cutting from which even top managers are not safe. Robinson and Forte make the battle personal by publicly trading insults before Robinson surges to victory. The film charts the effect on the Forte company (many senior people broke down in tears) and Rocco's comeback in the hotel business.

Peter Waymark

RADIO CHOICE

Sound Stories: Feuds Corner
Radio 3, 11.00am

You would be amazed how many people hate *Sound Stories*: they get in a terrible lather about it. Some complain of the celebrity presenters (this week Richard Baker), others that the programme trivialises the music by being too concerned with the personalities involved. Rot and balderdash. I enjoy these music-and-word pictures and the present run of programmes, focusing on feuds in music, today considers the spats between Berlioz and his former teacher, Cherubini, the latter being the doyen of the Paris music scene at the time and therefore the self-professed protector of rigid orthodoxy in music, something Berlioz was quite determined to overthrow. The choice of music today nicely illustrates the differing approaches of the two.

Murder, Magic and Medicine
Radio 4, 11.00am

Recently *Woman's Hour* told a disturbing tale of a man who had a sore throat and bought one of the proprietory treatments from a chemist. He became addicted and spent vast sums of money buying huge quantities of the stuff from pharmacists all over the country, carting the haul home in plastic carrier bags. With that in mind, this new series is, among other things, a salutary lesson in just what we are taking in when we swallow routine medicines. Migraine? One cure comes from a mould that killed 40,000 people in the 10th century. Most successful medicines originate from plants and the series starts by tracing the point at which herbalism and modern western techniques began to take different paths.

Peter Barnard

RADIO 1 (BBC)

6.30am Zoe Ball **9.00** Simon Mayo **12.00pm** Kevin Greening **2.00** Mark Radcliffe **4.00** Chris Moyles **6.00** Dave Pearce **8.00** Steve Lamacq: The Evening Session **10.00** Movie Update with Mark Kermode **10.10** John Peel **12.00am** Gilles Peterson **2.00** Clive Warren **4.00** Scott Mills

RADIO 2 (BBC)

6.00am Sarah Kennedy **7.30** Wake Up to Wogan **9.30** Ken Bruce **12.00pm** Jimmy Young **2.00** Ed Stewart **5.05** Johnnie Walker **7.00** Nick Barraclough **8.00** Mike Harding **9.00** The Andy Peebles Soul Show (8/13) **10.00** Route 66 Revisited with Nick Barraclough (5/7) **10.30** Richard Allinson **12.00am** Katrina Leskanich **3.00** Alex Lester

RADIO 5 LIVE (BBC)

5.00am Morning Reports **6.00** Breakfast with Nick Robinson and Victoria Derbyshire **9.00** Nicky Campbell **12.00pm** The Midday News with Annie Webster **1.00** Ruscoe and Co **4.00** Drive with Peter Allen and Jane Garvey **7.00** News Extra **7.30** John Inverdale's Football Night. Coverage of the night's action. Plus, the National Lottery draw **10.00** Littlejohn **11.00** Late Night Live with Brian Hayes **1.00am** Up All Night

VIRGIN

6.30am Chris Evans **9.30** Russ Williams **1.00pm** Nick Abbot **4.00** Harriet Scott **6.45** Mark Forrest **10.00** Richard Allen **1.00am** James Merritt **4.30** Jeremy Clark

TALK RADIO

6.00am Big Boys Breakfast with David Banks and Nick Ferrari **9.00** Scott Chisholm **12.00pm** Justice with Jacobs **1.00** Anna Raeburn **3.00** Peter Deeley's Drivetime **5.00** The Sports Zone **8.00** James Whale **1.00am** Ian Collins

BBC WORLD SERVICE

5.00am The World Today **7.00** World News **7.15** Outlook **7.55** My Century **8.00** World News **8.05** Westway **8.20** Off the Shelf: Silas Marner **8.35** One Planet **9.00** World News **9.05** Britain Now **9.20** World Ranking **9.50** Sports Round-Up **10.00** Newsdesk **10.30** Britain Today **10.45** Wild Tales **11.00** Newsdesk **11.30** Sports International **12.00pm** World News **12.05** Outlook **12.45** Sports Round-Up **1.00** Newshour **2.00** World News **2.05** One Planet **2.30** Meridian Live **3.00** World News **3.05** Sports Round-Up **3.15** From Our Own Correspondent **3.30** Jazzmatazz **4.00** World News **4.15** Insight **4.30** Multitrack: X-Press **5.00** Europe Today **5.30** World Business Report **5.45** Sports Round-Up **6.00** World News **6.15** Britain Today **6.30** Sports International **7.00** World News **7.05** One Planet **7.30** Wild Tales **7.45** Off the Shelf: Silas Marner **8.00** Newshour **9.00** World News **9.05** World Business Report **9.20** Britain Today **9.30** On Screen **10.00** World News **10.15** Sports Round-Up **10.30** Multitrack: X-Press **11.00** World News **11.05** Outlook **11.45** Insight **12.00am** The World Today **12.30** One Planet **12.55** My Century **1.00** The World Today **1.30** Meridian Live **2.00** The World Today **2.30** Everywoman **3.00** The World Today **3.20** Sports Round-Up **3.30** World Business Report **3.45** Insight **4.00** The World Today

CLASSIC FM

6.00am Nick Bailey's Easier Breakfast. Soothing music and information updates **9.00** Henry Kelly. The Hall of Fame Hour, and favourite pieces voted for in the Classic FM Top 300 **12.00pm** *Lunchtime Requests.* Jane Jones spins listeners' favourite pieces of classical music **2.00** Concerto. Offenbach (Concerto Militaire in G major) **3.00** Jamie Crick, including Afternoon Romance and Continuous Classics **6.30** Newsnight. Headlines, arts news and guests introduced by John Brunning **7.00** Smooth Classics at Seven. John Brunning introduces easy-listening sounds **9.00** Evening Concert. Mozart (Sinfonia Concertante in E flat); Beethoven (Symphony No 2 in D) **11.00** Mann at Night. Music and conversation for the early hours with Alan Mann **2.00am** Concerto. Offenbach (Concerto Militaire in G major) (r) **3.00** Mark Griffiths. The Early Breakfast Show

RADIO 3

6.00am On Air with Petroc Trelawny. Includes Chopin (Nocturne in E flat, Op 9 No 2); Dvorak (The Water Goblin); Franz Waxman (Carmen Fantasy)
9.00 Masterworks with Peter Hobday. Gabrieli (Canzon a 7), Haydn (Piano Trio in C, H XV 27); Faure (Pelleas et Melisande), Granados (Los requiebros, Goyescas); Michael Haydn (Horn Concerto in D), Tchaikovsky (Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture)
10.30 Artist of the Week: Emanuel Ax
11.00 Sound Stories: Feuds Corner Richard Baker looks at the complex relationship between Cherubini and Berlioz. See Choice
12.00pm Composer of the Week: Rimsky-Korsakov
1.00 The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert Live from the Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire. Stephanie Gonley, violin, John Lenehan, piano. Beethoven (Violin Sonata in A minor, Op 23); Schoenberg (Phantasy, Op 47); Brahms (Violin Sonata No 2 in A, Op 100)
2.00 The BBC Orchestras Ulster Orchestra under Charles Hazlewood and Nicholas Braithwaite, Clio Gould, violin
4.00 Choral Evensong Live from Manchester Cathedral. Organist and master of the choristers Christopher Stokes. Sub-organist Matthew Owens
5.00 In Tune Sean Rafferty talks to Robert von Bahr of BIS Records
8.00 Performance on 3 Live from the Eden Court Theatre, Inverness, introduced by Geoffrey Baskerville. BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Jerzy Maksymiuk, Ilya Itin, piano. Alasdair Nicolson (Breakdance); Rachmaninov (Piano Concerto No 3 in D minor) **8.55** News from North Britain: Virtual, by by Ali Smith. The first of five new stories from Scotland **9.15** Concert, part two. Dvorak (Symphony No 7 in D minor)
10.05 Postscript: The Red Flag and the Red Mask
10.30 Cyril Scott (Symphonic Dance No 1). Performed by Percy Grainger and the composer, pianos
10.45 Night Waves with Laura Cumming
11.30 Jazz Notes Alyn Shipton presents the second of two programmes featuring Cleo Laine and the Alec and John Dankworth Generation Band
12.00am Composer of the Week: Poulenc (r)
1.00 Through the Night with Donald Macleod. **1.00** Hungarian Radio Orchestra under Charles Munch **2.05** Ives (The Unanswered Question) **2.40** Paganini (Violin Sonata in A minor) **3.00-5.00** Schools: Time and Tune **3.20** Together **3.40** Dance Workshop **4.00** EAL Dance **4.20** TBA **5.00** Sibelius (Valse Triste) **5.30** Ponce (Preludes)

RADIO 4

5.30am World News 5.35 Shipping Forecast
5.40 Inshore Forecast 5.45 Prayer for the Day
5.47 Farming Today Rural issues, with Anna Hill
6.00 Today Introduced by James Naughtie and Winifred Robinson
8.35 (LW) Yesterday in Parliament
9.00 Midweek Lively conversation with the *Times* Libby Purves and guests
9.45 (LW) Daily Service
9.45 (FM) Serial: The Doctor, the Detective and Arthur Conan Doyle Michael Williams reads part three of Martin Booth's biography (r)
10.00 Woman's Hour with Jenni Murray and guests
11.00 Murder, Magic and Medicine New series. Dr Michael O'Donnell investigates the roots of modern remedies. See Choice (1/6)
11.30 Choice Grenfell Maureen Lipman reinterprets Joyce Grenfell's monologues and songs (3/4)
12.00pm (LW) News Headlines; Shipping Forecast
12.00 (FM) News 12.04 You and Yours Trixie Rawlinson and Mark Whitaker present consumer news and investigations
1.00 The World at One Presented by Nick Clarke
1.30 Wildbrain Lionel Kelleway chairs the final of the wildlife quiz
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Afternoon Play: Voyages of Descent Clare Seal's tale exploring the themes of evolution and creation. With James MacPherson and Robin Thomson. Narrated by Fenella Fielding
3.00 Gardeners' Question Time John Cushnie, Bob Flowerdew and Anne Swithinbank answer questions posed by gardeners in Cornwall (r)
3.30 Tales from the Village Joel Kibazo investigates the religion of Legion Maria, which combines Catholicism with ancient myth (3/5) (r)
3.45 This Sceptred Isle Anna Massey narrates the Norman Conquest (r)
4.00 Case Notes Special: No Issue Tracey Logan examines the future of fertility (r)
4.30 Thinking Allowed with Polly Toynbee and guests
5.00 PM Introduced by Clare English and Eddie Mair
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Like They've Never Been Gone Mike Coleman's comedy, starring Roy Hudd and June Whitfield as a showbiz couple who find fame again. With Pat Coombs and Julian Eardley (r)
7.00 The Archers
7.15 Front Row John Wilson presents the arts programme, looking at the work of the New York painter Julian Schnabel as a new exhibition opens in Britain
7.45 Lady Susan by Jane Austen. Broadcast earlier as part of Woman's Hour (r)
8.00 Them and Us Diana Madill chairs a debate on whether illegal drugs have become so commonplace that their use is widely accepted (3/3)
8.45 Gerry's Bar Gerry Anderson reflects on life in the Republic of Ireland (r)
9.00 Animals Behaving Badly Mike Carwardine looks at animals' deadly behaviour (4/4)
9.30 Midweek (r)
10.00 The World Tonight with Anne McKenzie
10.45 Book at Bedtime: Nana Part eight
11.00 Late Night on 4: Sean Lock's 15 Minutes of Misery The award-winning comedian Sean Lock presents his own brand of downbeat humour
11.15 For One Horrible Moment Peter Bradshaw's darkly humorous account of a boy's transition to adulthood in 1970s Cambridgeshire (2/5)
11.30 (FM) The Cheese Shop Presents Comedy sketches (r)
11.30 (LW) Today in Parliament
12.00am News 12.30 The Late Book: Last Resort Kate Harper reads part three of Alison Lurie's tale
12.48 Shipping Forecast 1.00 As World Service

FREQUENCY GUIDE. RADIO 1. FM 97.6-99.8. RADIO 2. FM 88.0-90.2. RADIO 3. FM 90.2-92.4. RADIO 4. FM 92.4-94.6; LW 198; MW 720. RADIO 5 LIVE. MW 693, 909. WORLD SERVICE. MW 648; LW 198 (12.45-5.55am). CLASSIC FM. FM 100-102. VIRGIN RADIO. FM 105.8; MW 1197, 1215. TALK RADIO. MW 1053, 1089. Television and radio listings compiled by Ian Hughes, Rosemary Smith, Susan Thomson, Jane Gregory and John McNamara.

Hospital beds? You must be off your trolley

Television's newest hospital drama, **Holby City** (BBC), was born from *Casualty* the way *Softly Softly* emerged from the long-running *Z Cars*, the way *Cheers* gave birth to *Frasier*, and the way one Carol Vorderman show split, like an amoeba, to become two Carol Vorderman programmes and then four Carol Vorderman programmes, and then eight, then 16. Politics works in much the same way, as each of the central characters on the political stage gets a chance to make a pilot for its very own — hopefully ratings-grabbing — series.

It's a difficult trick to pull off. The much-publicised Robin Cook soap opera, which is the latest spin-off from new Labour's main storyline, merely reinforces the feeling among viewers that Downing Street has yet to get the hang of creating an appealing central character in its dramatic babies.

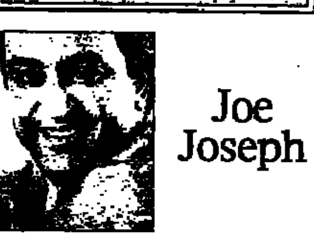
It's quite possible that *Holby City* itself is a New Labour Production, since it painted a far rosier picture of the NHS than Frank Dobson has been managing to do. There were no bed shortages. No freezer lorries in the car park filled with the overspill from the hospital morgue, no dire shortage of nurses, no invalids sleeping on trolleys.

When, early in this opening episode, talk turned to how a donor had been located and how a team from Holby would have to fly to a hospital in Cornwall to collect the precious object, many of us were expecting surgical registrar Nick Jordan (Michael French) to return to Holby bearing a valuable bed. But it turned out to be a heart.

After that *Holby City*, like too many medical dramas, became confused: it momentarily thought it was part of an Open University broadcast, because we saw the heart-transplant operation in such detail that medical students could have used it to supplement their lecture notes. And so much blood! You can only assume that someone in the props department had mistakenly over-ordered the fake blood, and that the cast decided they might as well get through the stockpile as quickly as possible.

It all moves along at a steady pace, and the main characters play their parts convincingly enough, but it can't help having the feel of "*ER* Lite" about it. This is the tragedy for shows which hit our screens at the same time as masterpieces of the genre. Pity anyone launching their sitcom when *Seinfeld* or *Larry Sanders* is on air. You'd have included the brilliant *Frasier* on this list until last week, only now you even feel pity for the bumptious Seattle psychiatrist: it must be tough for Frasier Crane to watch Robin Cook on TV and to have to acknowledge that there is now an even a bigger, vainer buffoon on the box than himself.

REVIEW



Joe Joseph

Michael Portillo is another politician trying his hand at a solo screen career, independent of the ensemble show ("Major's Madhouse") in which he first enjoyed a starring role. In **Great Railway Journeys** (BBC2), the former Tory Transport Minister chugged from Granada to Salamanca, showing us *en route* a side of Portillo we hadn't seen recently: a Portillo who isn't constantly pledging to stick by William Hague in his hour of need, thereby indirectly highlighting what a mess the Tory leader is in.

Portillo takes the opportunity to reminds us that his Spanish father was a poet and law professor who showed his love of socialism and democracy by joining the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, while at the same time showing his love for his family by refusing to carry a gun lest he accidentally kill one of his six brothers, all of whom fought for Franco. But only a cynic (*not you, sir, surely!*) would see this film as part of Portillo's attempt to show us that he isn't the insensitive xenophobe he is painted by his political enemies.

"I've never been in any doubt that I'm temperamentally half Spanish," he told us, screwing his face into his distant, thoughtful expression, the one one that makes him look as if he has eaten something distasteful and is waiting for a convenient break in filming to spit it out. "I get emotional, and I have that Castilian concern about things like dignity and honour." But in order to show us that he had gained a new perspective on life since losing his seat in May 1997, he also reflected on the sacrifices that his father had to make in order to flee fascism — leaving behind his family, his job, the country he loved — and said that they put "firmly in context the setbacks that the rest of us sometimes suffer: they are as nothing". Well, all these things may be perfectly true, but who's going to believe them when it's a politician doing the talking?

But there were nostalgic glimpses of the old Portillo we remember shining through. Over a family lunch with his Spanish relatives, Portillo's uncle was telling his nephew that his father was the middle of the seven bothers. "He's saying that the middle position is the position of virtue," Michael translated for the camera, *adding*: "It must be a Spanish expression!" It's certainly not a British politician expression — at any rate not one that would have tripped off Portillo's tongue during his Smith Square days.

Mark Lewis's cunning film, **Rat** (Channel 4), blended together a compendium of spooky facts about New York's rat community with a series of mini-soaps in which owners of rat-infested apartments *re-enacted* their battles with their unwanted guests: most lost. One exterminator from New York's Bureau of Pest Control told Lewis: "I've seem *some* that were the size of a racoon, and when you see that you *know* something's wrong." But that's just empty New York bragging: in London we've been seeing rats the size of Cabinet ministers.

BBC1

6.00am Business Breakfast (45232)
7.00 BBC Breakfast News (T) (21329)
9.00 Kilroy (T) (8609665)
9.45 The Vanessa Show (T) (5145435)
10.55 News; Weather (T) (7011329)
11.00 Real Rooms (7021706)
11.25 Can't Cook, Won't Cook (T) (7928665)
11.55 News; Weather (T) (1217961)
12.00pm Call My Bluff (69690)
12.30 Battersea Dogs' Home (94874)
1.00 One O'Clock News (T) (24416)
1.30 Regional News; Weather (86632665)
1.40 Neighbours Ruth faces a professional dilemma (T) (65312481)
2.05 Ironside A hitman is hired to do away with the canny copper before he can testify at a syndicate trial (r) (7605955)
2.55 Going for a Song (8590110)
3.20 The Weather Show (T) (2094961)
3.25 Children's BBC: Playdays (7191510) **3.45** Little Monsters (9189961) **3.50** ChuckleVision (8023023) **4.10** See It Saw It (6932495) **4.35** The Wild House (1664597) **5.00** Newsround (5401226) **5.10** Blue Peter (6534481)
5.35 Neighbours (r) (T) (703435)
6.00 Six O'Clock News; Weather (T) (481)
6.30 Regional News Magazine (961)
7.00 Wildlife on One Intimate portrait of a pack of wild wolves living in the Canadian Arctic, showing how the family copes with the harsh conditions (r) (T) (9058)
7.30 Dream House The walls of the home are erected in time for Carol Vorderman to take a tour of the building, while Adam Woodyatt rates the best and worst lawnmowers on the market (T) (145)
8.00 Changing Rooms Neighbours in South Wales are challenged to revamp a room in each other's houses (T) (8706)
8.30 Battersea Dogs' Home The actor Simon Callow introduces his ex-Battersea resident Lurcher (T) (972139)
8.50 National Lottery: Amazing Luck Stories (T) (947058)
9.00 Nine O'Clock News; Regional News; Weather (T) (5077)



Another strange case for agent Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) (9.30pm)

9.30 The X Files Mulder and Scully recall their own version of events leading to the death of an alleged teenage vampire. With Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny (T) (662394)
10.15 Don't Call Us Documentary tracing the history of the talent show (T) (809023)
10.50 Confessions of the Cheshire Set Insight into the lives of Cheshire's high-society elite (T) (708955)
11.40 In the Deep Woods (TVM 1992) FILM Mystery thriller, starring Rosanna Arquette as a children's author drawn into the search for a vicious serial killer. With Anthony Perkins. Directed by Charles Correll (T) (414752)
1.10am Weather (4811153)
1.15 BBC News 24 (59886714)

BBC2

7.00am Children's BBC Breakfast Show: Tales of the Tooth Fairies (8992923) **7.05** Teletubbies (2967400) **7.30** Yogi's Treasure Hunt (3919232) **7.55** The Really Wild Show (2246394) **8.13** Rewind (8713961) **8.15** Taz-Mania (5749145) **8.40** Polka Dot Shorts (8242435) **8.50** Brum (8248619) **9.00** Daytime On Two: Environment (7168690) **9.10** What? Where? When? Why? (7082226) **9.25** The Art (6507706) **9.45** Words and Pictures (8272042) **10.00** Children's BBC: Teletubbies (16955) **10.30** Daytime On Two: Numbertime (5848226) **10.45** Cats' Eyes (5836481) **11.00** Around Scotland (1586690) **11.20** The Geography Programme (6410771) **11.40** Science in Action (2242313) **12.00pm** Revista (4083961) **12.15** Hallo aus Berlin (9395313) **12.30** Working Lunch (92416) **1.00** Brum (73603110)
1.10 The Arts and Crafts Hour (2428752)
2.10 Sporting Greats (22229348)
2.40 News; Weather (T) (8982313)
2.45 Westminster (T) (6873110)
3.55 News; Weather (T) (9680145)
4.00 That's Entertainment, Part Two (1976) FILM Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly introduce a compilation of MGM musical and comedy highlights (T) (9435)
6.00 Star Trek: The Next Generation Alien historians arrive to conduct research on the crew (r) (T) (536597)
6.45 Buffy the Vampire Slayer Buffy battles a giant praying mantis (T) (930684)
7.30 Tales from the Riverbank Insight into the life-cycle of a salmon as it journeys along Scotland's rivers (r) (T) (787)
8.00 CHOICE **Battle of the Sexes** Insight into "girl power" in the animal kingdom (T) (6348)
8.30 Home Front Tips on creating a mock period dining-room (T) (2955)



An armed officer of the Merseyside Police Force (9pm)

9.00 CHOICE **Mersey Blues** New series offering an insight into the work of Merseyside Police (T) (431110)
9.50 CHOICE **Blood on the Carpet** New series. Investigations into dodgy dealings in the commercial world (1/6) (T) (285394)
10.30 Newsnight (T) (325771)
11.15 Trial by Jury The jury hear Mark's lover give evidence (3/3) (T) (556329)
11.55 Weather (748416)
12.00 Despatch Box (48443)
12.30am BBC Learning Zone: Open University: The Birth of Liquid Crystals **1.00** Hidden Visions **1.30** Lifelines **2.00** Schools: The IT Collection **4.00** Languages: The New Get By in Spanish — Part 2 **5.00** Business and Training: Voluntary Matters — Achieving Your Aims **5.30** 20 Steps to Better Management — The Art of Influence **5.45** Open University: Immigration, Prejudice and Ethnicity **6.35** The Passionate Statistician

HTV

5.30am ITN Morning News (92684)
6.00 GMTV (6897690)
9.25 Trisha (T) (3661961)
10.30 This Morning (T) (24165771)
12.15pm HTV News (T) (9399139)
12.30 ITN Lunchtime News (T) (16042)
1.00 Next Stop Richard Wyatt, Polly Lloyd and correspondents are in Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire, where they review local developments (46684)
1.30 Home and Away Sam feels unwanted (T) (15313)
2.00 The Jerry Springer Show Outrageous American talk show (T) (2902145)
2.45 Supermarket Sweep (T) (173455)
3.15 ITN News Headlines (T) (2099416)
3.20 HTV News (T) (2096329)
3.25 CITV: Mopatop's Shop (2906752) **3.35** Teddybears (8528874) **3.45** Jumanji (8464684) **4.10** Whizziwig (9500955) **4.40** Mad for It (7112787)
5.10 A Country Practice Perce has a problem (6800918)
5.40 ITN Early Evening News; Weather (T) (238226)
5.59 HTV Crimestoppers (381503)
6.00 Home and Away (r) (T) (563665)
6.25 HTV Weather (915619)
6.30 The West Tonight (T) (329)
7.00 Emmerdale Steve and Kim take the stand (T) (1226)
7.30 Coronation Street Les looks for a roof over his head (T) (313)



Chris Tarrant introduces the climax of the big money quiz (8pm)

8.00 Who Wants to be a Millionaire? Big-prize game show (T) (3874)
8.30 Police, Camera, Action! Alastair Stewart focuses on car theft (r) (T) (9481)
9.00 Garages From Hell Car-owners convinced they've been ripped off by unscrupulous mechanics get the chance to see their worst suspicions confirmed in this one-off documentary (T) (2619)
10.00 News at Ten; Weather (T) (62787)
10.30 HTV News and Weather (T) (454665)
10.40 The Big Match Highlights of tonight's FA Cup third-round replays (21395329)
12.15am Fatal Deception: Mrs Lee Harvey Oswald (TVM 1993) FILM Fact-based drama, starring Helena Bonham Carter as the wife of JFK's alleged assassin. With Frank Whaley and Robert Picardo. Directed by Robert Dornhelm (168658)
1.55 The Jerry Springer Show (T) (2188240)
2.40 Masterclass The art of songwriting (2/9) (9561801)
3.10 Trisha Shown earlier (r) (T) (3225424)
4.15 Picking the Fruit: The Making of Still Crazy Behind the scenes of the comedy film (r) (95889153)
4.40 Soundtrax Cutting-edge sounds (88442530)
4.50 ITV Nightscreen Behind the scenes of ITV programmes (25605248)
5.00 Coronation Street (r) (T) (40462)

CENTRAL

As HTV West except:
12.20-12.30pm Central News (6088787)
1.00 Echo Point (46684)
1.30 The Jerry Springer Show (9937042)
2.15-2.45 Home and Away (605464)
3.20-3.25 Central News (2096329)
5.10-5.40 Shortland Street (6800918)
6.25-7.00 Central News; Weather (506961)
10.30-10.40 Central News; Weather (454665)
4.05am Central Jobfinder '99 (8958998)
5.20-5.30 Asian Eye (4242153)

As HTV West except:
12.15-12.27pm Westcountry News; Weather (9399139)
12.27-12.30 Illuminations (6096706)
1.00 Emmerdale (46684)
1.30 The Jerry Springer Show (9937042)
2.15-2.45 Home and Away (605464)
3.20-3.25 Westcountry News; Weather (2096329)
5.08 Birthday People (8520936)
5.10-5.40 Home and Away (6800918)
6.00-7.00 Westcountry Live (97961)
10.30-10.40 Westcountry News; Weather (454665)

As HTV West except:
12.15-12.30pm Meridian News; Weather (9399139)
1.00-1.35 Shortland Street (1252110)
5.10-5.40 Home and Away (6800918)
6.00 Meridian Tonight (357)
6.30-7.00 Birdwatch (329)
10.30-10.40 Meridian News; Weather (454665)
5.00-5.30am Freescreen (40462)

As HTV West except: **12.19pm Anglia Air Watch** (6994394) **12.20-12.30 Anglia News and Weather** (6088787) **1.00-1.35 Upshot!** (r) (1252110) **5.10-5.40 Shortland Street** (6800918) **6.23 Anglia Weather** (916348) **6.25-7.00 Anglia News** (T) (506961) **10.29 Anglia Air Watch** (825058) **10.30-10.40 Anglia News and Weather** (T) (454665)

Starts: **6.00am Sesame Street** (21700955) **7.00 The Big Breakfast** (47095690) **9.00 Ysgolion:** Antoine De Caunes Tour de France (16590936) **9.30 Rat-a-Tat-Tat** (89623690) **9.45 Book Box** (89628145) **10.00 Stage Two Science** (35798955) **10.15 All About Us** (35884706) **10.30 The French Programme** (17366329) **10.50 Stop, Look, Listen** (93976597) **11.00 Dwr Aer Tir** (18062400) **11.15 Tackling Technology** (18052023) **11.30 Powerhouse** (T) (24951145) **12.00pm Bewitched** (T) (16503400) **12.30 Sesame Street** (38678874) **1.00 Planed Plant;** (T) Ffwrdd a ni (54449348) **1.15 Mifi** (54437503) **1.30 FILM: The Bishop's Wife** (T) (99962955) **3.30 Hampton Court Palace** (T) (56285481) **4.00 Fifteen-to-One Highlights** (T) (56377416) **4.30 Ricki Lake** (T) (56293400) **5.00 Planed Plant** (27680990) **5.30 Countdown** (T) (56284752) **6.00 Newyddion 6** (T) (69163042) **6.10 Heno** (T) (95872139) **7.00 Pobol y Cwm** (T) (72539446) **7.30 Newyddion** (T) (58374329) **8.00 Ffermio** (T) (21280954) **8.30 Pacio** (81084351) **9.00 ER** (r) (T) (77352634) **10.00 Brookside** (T) (54052042) **10.35 ER** (r) (T) (36335139) **11.30 Mark Thomas Comedy Product** (35705961) **12.00am Comedy Lab** (98728511) **12.35 Football Italia: Mezzanotte** (66161646) **3.00 Trans World Sport** (18445240) **4.00 Diwedd**

CHANNEL 4

6.00am Sesame Street (65042)
7.00 The Big Breakfast (41139)
9.00 Schools: French Express (76936) **9.30** Rat-a-Tat-Tat (8279955) **9.45** Book Box (8267110) **10.00** Stage Two Science (9569348) **10.15** All About Us (9479771) **10.30** Channel Hopping (3221706) **10.50** Stop, Look, Listen (2660139) **11.00** First Edition VI (6401023) **11.15** Tackling Technology (6597874)
11.30 Powerhouse (T) (6752)
12.00 Sesame Street (T) (89400)
12.30pm Bewitched (T) (14684)
1.00 Pet Rescue Highlights of the show's first series (r) (T) (44226)
1.30 Roots to Success (T) (86649955)
1.45 Wee Willie Winkie (1937) FILM A widow and her young daughter move to a British Army outpost in India. Starring Shirley Temple, C. Aubrey Smith and June Lang. Directed by John Ford (T) (77537058)
3.30 Hampton Court Palace (T) (435)
4.00 Fifteen-to-One (T) (482)
4.30 Countdown (T) (1658936)
4.55 Ricki Lake (T) (4769394)
5.30 Pet Rescue (T) (706)
6.00 Late Lunch with Mel and Sue Chat and cookery with special guests Lorraine Kelly and Michelle Collins (T) (95503)
7.00 Channel 4 News; Weather (T) (274145)
7.50 Gilbert and Sullivan: The Very Models The effects of *The Mikado*'s success on the writing duo (T) (810145)
8.00 Brookside Luke is under suspicion (T) (1416)
8.30 The Real Holiday Show True-life tales of vacation highs and lows, including a career woman's singles break and a group of Essex lads keen to show off their speed boat in Majorca (8/8) (T) (7023)
9.00 ER Ross comes under fire for his one-night stand with a medical student, then lays his career on the line by taking controversial action to save a child's life. George Clooney and Anthony Edwards star (r) (T) (3961)
10.00 ER Ross visits his estranged father, leaving the emergency unit jam-packed with women in labour (r) (T) (4648961)



Mark Thomas returns with a new series of topical comedy (11.05pm)

11.05 Mark Thomas Comedy Product New series. Topical observations from comedy writer Mark Thomas, featuring stand-up performances and ludicrous real-life hoaxes (T) (915706)
11.30 Comedy Lab Jason Byrne (74135)
12.00 Board Stupid (r) (5661578)
12.35am Football Italia: Mezzanotte Round-up of last week's action (34661004)
3.00 Trans World Sport Global action (36191)
4.00 Submarine Patrol (1938) FILM Comedy adventure, starring Preston Foster as a disgraced US Navy officer put in charge of a run-down wooden vessel and its motley crew during the First World War. Directed by John Ford (151882)

CHANNEL 5

6.00am 5 News and Sport With Becky Anderson (7900145)
7.00 WideWorld Part four. How marine creatures have evolved (r) (T) (9005348)
7.30 Milkshake! (4659351)
7.35 Wimzie's House (r); 5 News Update (9729961)
8.00 Havakazoo (r) (1096752)
8.30 Dappledown Farm (r); 5 News Update (1095023)
9.00 Hot Property (r) (T) (2772435)
9.25 Russell Grant's Postcards (4794690)
9.30 The Oprah Winfrey Show (6455597)
10.20 Sunset Beach Caitlin leaves Cole (T) (2126145)
11.10 Leeza (r) (2933771)
12.00pm 5 News at Noon (T) (1006139)
12.30 Family Affairs Jamie leaves home (r) (T); 5 News Update (9872868)
1.00 The Bold and the Beautiful James offers Sheila a place to stay (T) (9004619)
1.30 The Roseanne Show The outrageous comedienne chats with Joan Collins; 5 News Update (9871139)
2.00 100 Per Cent Gold (6292139)
2.30 Good Afternoon Daily entertainment, featuring word game Cryptogram, real-life soap Liverpool Mums and Selling the Family Silver, with Eric Knowles; 5 News Update (4557503)
3.30 Joe Dancer: The Big Trade (TVM 1981) FILM The private investigator attempts to unravel the truth behind the mysterious killing of a rising movie star on the set of his latest film. Thriller, starring Robert Blake. Directed by Reza Badiyi (9568394)
5.20 Sunset Beach Shown earlier (r) (T); 5 News Update (6017023)
6.00 100 Per Cent Computer-generated quiz (5226348)
6.30 Family Affairs Annie confesses her true feelings (T) (5137400)
7.00 5 News; Weather Round-up of the day's stories, including First on Five (T) (6296955)
7.30 Champions of the Wild Dr Colin Chapman's efforts to save Uganda's beleaguered chimpanzees from harm (T); 5 News Update (5133684)
8.00 CHOICE **Wing and a Prayer** New series of the hard-hitting legal drama. Kate Buffery, George Irving and Dominic Mafham star (1/8) (T); 5 News Update (5464752)
9.00 Hostile Force (1996) FILM A petty criminal organises a bank heist, but falls for a former policewoman he takes hostage during the raid — will their new-found love prevent her from foiling his plan? Action thriller, starring Andrew McCarthy, Cynthia Geary and Wolf Larsen. Directed by Michael Kennedy (T); 5 News Update (12243936)
10.50 Not Melinda's Big Night In With Tara-Palmer Tomkinson (3451706)
11.30 Strange Luck Chance helps a would-be hockey star shake off the gangsters threatening to kill his father (9701416)
12.25am NHL: American Ice Hockey Phoenix Coyotes at Buffalo Sabres (46630733)
4.40 Club Class Comedy show (r) (72542608)
5.05 Move on Up (r) (85529849)
5.30 100 Per Cent (r) (4659135)

PAY TV: SATELLITE, CABLE AND DIGITAL

● **For further listings see Saturday's *Vision***

SKY ONE

7.00am Court Duckula (83139) 7.30 Chris Evans (35348) 8.30 Hollywood Squares (60954) 9.00 Sally Jessy Raphael (37771) 10.00 Oprah Winfrey (64058) 11.00 Guilty! (71394) 12.00pm Jenny Jones (59771) 1.00 Mad About You (75110) 1.30 Jeopardy (42435) 2.00 Sally Jessy Raphael (59684) 3.00 Jenny Jones (44329) 4.00 Guilty! (50936) 5.00 Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (7969) 6.00 Married with Children (3313) 6.30 Friends (4665) 7.00 Simpsons (1868) 7.30 Simpsons (6077) 8.00 Stargate SG-1 (74058) 9.00 X-Files (61394) 10.00 Naked in Westminster (84481) 11.00 Friends (51665) 11.30 Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (16400) 12.30am Highlander (18220) 1.30 Long Play (5995820)

SKY BOX OFFICE

Sky's pay-per-view movie channels. To view any film telephone 0990 800888
SKY BOX OFFICE 1 (Transponder 28) **Crash (1997)**
SKY BOX OFFICE 2 (Transponder 60) **GI Jane (1997)**
SKY BOX OFFICE 3 (Transponder 59), **Buddy (1997)** **Starship Troopers (1997)**
SKY BOX OFFICE 4 (Transponder 56) **One Night Stand (1997)**

FILMFOUR

6.00pm The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey [illegible]

SKY PREMIER

[illegible]

(880145) 11.50 **The Abyss (1989)** (16031961) 2.10am **Defenseless (1991)** (503066) 3.55 **Carriers (1997)** (89162289)

SKY MOVIEMAX

5.30am **Time to Say Goodbye? (1997)** (84787) 7.00 UK Top 10 (74435) 7.30 **Femmes Fatales** (8539139) 8.15 Movie Magic (2788394) 9.00 **Lovestruck (1996)** (53400) 11.00 **End of the Golden Weather (1992)** (95868) 1.00pm UK Top 10 (73706) 1.30 **Femmes Fatales** (9482787) 2.15 Movie Magic (3868139) 3.00 **The Big Game (1995)** (90416) 5.00 **End of the Golden Weather (1992)** (11023) 7.00 **Lovestruck (1996)** (8177) 9.00 **One Hot Summer Night (1997)** (99313) 11.00 **Cobra (1986)** (34348) 12.30am **Flesh and Blood (1985)** (42954559) 2.35 **The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds (1972)** (492846) 4.15 **The Big Game (1995)** (426608)

SKY CINEMA

4.00pm **City That Never Sleeps (1953)** (8918752) 6.00 **Magic Town (1947)** (7398365) 8.00 **Merrill's Marauders (1962)** (7391110) 10.00 **For a Few Dollars More (1966)** (32135482) 12.10am **Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore (1974)** (8843153) 2.05 **The Magus (1968)** (4564849) 4.05 **Anne of Windy Poplars (1940)** (3814375)

TNT

9.00pm **Somebody Up There Likes Me (1956)** (36711110) 11.15 **Hearts of the West (1975)** (14745348) 1.15am **The** [illegible]

SKY SPORTS 1

[illegible]

SKY SPORTS 2

7.00am Aerobics 7.30 Live Cricket 11.00 V-Max 11.30 Sports Unlimited 12.30pm Total Sport 1.00 Cricket 3.00 Golf Extra 6.00 Watersports World 7.00 Live FA Cup Football 10.00 Golf Extra 1.00am European Tour Golf Weekly 1.30 Watersports World 2.30 Sports Centre 2.45 Close

SKY SPORTS 3

12.00pm Wrestling 1.00 Fish TV 2.00 Superbouts 3.00 Olympic Series: Road to Nagano 3.30 Rafting 4.30 Figure Skating 6.30 European Tour Golf Weekly 7.00 Fish TV 8.00 International Cricket 10.00 Sky Sports Classics Gold Cricket 11.00 Football: The Entertainers 11.30 Close

EUROSPORT

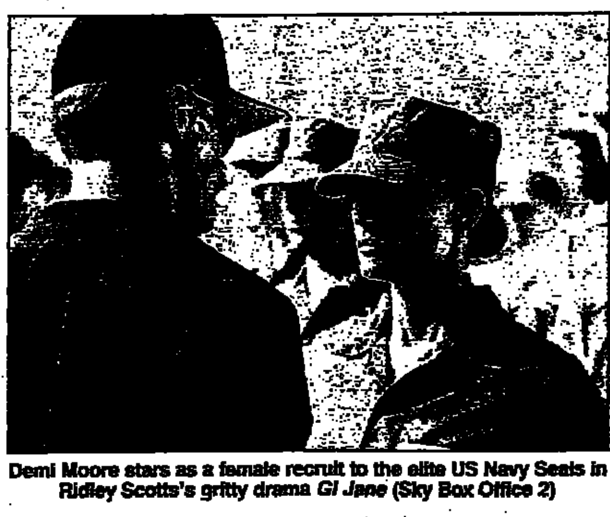
7.30am Rally 8.00 Snowboarding 9.00 Live Biathlon 10.00 Alpine Skiing 10.30 Live Women's Biathlon 11.30 Rally 12.00pm Biathlon 1.30 Football 3.30 Biathlon 5.00 Snowboarding 6.00 Speedworld 7.00 Strongman 8.00 Darts 9.30 Rally 10.00 Boxing 11.00 Speedworld 12.00am Rally 12.30 Close

UK GOLD

7.00am Crossroads 7.30 Neighbours 7.55 EastEnders 8.30 The Bill 9.00 The Bill 9.30 The House of Eliott 10.30 Angels 11.00 Dallas 11.55 Neighbours 12.25pm EastEnders 1.00 Juliet Bravo 2.00 Dallas 2.55 The Bill 3.25 The Bill 3.55 EastEnders 4.30 Angels 5.00 All Creatures Great and Small 6.00 Dynasty 7.00 May to December [illegible]

GRANADA PLUS

[illegible]



Demi Moore stars as a female recruit to the elite US Navy Seals in Ridley Scott's gritty drama *GI Jane* (Sky Box Office 2)

Conley Show 10.00 Jokers Wild 10.30 Hogan's Heroes 11.00 Men and Motors

DISNEY CHANNEL

6.00am Bear in the Big Blue House 6.25 Classic Toons 6.35 Gummi Bears 7.00 [illegible]

NICKELODEON

[illegible]

TROUBLE

[illegible]

BRAVO

[illegible]

PARAMOUNT COMEDY

[illegible]

THE SCI-FI CHANNEL

[illegible]

FOX KIDS NETWORK

[illegible]

HOME & LEISURE

[illegible]

DISCOVERY

[illegible]

ANIMAL PLANET

[illegible]

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

[illegible]

HISTORY

[illegible]

CARLTON FOOD

[illegible]

LIVING

[illegible]

ZEE TV

[illegible]

BOWLS 38
Yellow fever takes firm hold on Norfolk coast

SPORT

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 13 1999

SAILING 39
Ainslie stays on course for world title



Three miles in front, the finish in sight, a runner staggers into history



Peters earns an unwanted place in sporting history as he first wobbles alarmingly then collapses on the final lap of the 1954 Empire Games marathon in Vancouver







Jim Peters, 1950s icon, dies aged 80

By John Goodbody

WHEN Jim Peters started the final lap of the 1954 Empire Games marathon in the searing heat of Vancouver, he had a lead of more than three miles. Glory was in sight, but, as the crowd rose to acclaim him, Peters faltered and began to stagger. He never crossed the finishing line, but his valiant, agonising efforts to cover the final few yards made an unforgettable sight, carried to millions on *Movietone News*.

Peters, whose death at the age of 80 on Saturday was announced yesterday, never ran in a significant competition again, but his place in British sporting history was secure. In the course of his marathon career, Peters had broken the world best four times, but, when he entered the stadium in Vancouver, he was suffering from the effects of his fast early pace in temperatures of 75F. Dehydrated, he fell about six times and began crawling on the track.

Among his anguished British team-mates at trackside were Roger Bannister and Chris Brasher, who later founded the London Marathon. No one dared to assist Peters in his distress, remembering that Dorando Pietri, of Italy, had been disqualified in 1908 when helped across the line at the London Olympic Games. It was only when it was clear that Peters was not going to finish that they went to his aid. The eventual winner was Joe McGhee, of Scotland, whose victory has been almost forgotten.

Eventually, an English medical official put an end to his suffering by clasping him to his chest and leading him to the safety of a medical centre. However, although the effort ended the career of Peters, he became, like Pietri, more celebrated in defeat than in his victories in the 1950s.

Newsreel shots of Peters gripped the imagination of the British public in cinemas across the country — 1954 was before the Games (now the Commonwealth Games) were televised extensively. They also empathised with his statement: "I was completely bewildered, but I just did not want to disgrace my wife and kiddies." Even in the medical centre, he asked, in his pain, whether he had won, only to have the sympathetic reply from a nurse "you did very well". Peters suffered in the race because, at that time, it was not realised that marathon runners needed to drink regularly to avoid dehydration.

David Bedford, the international race director of the London Marathon, said yesterday: "Jim was a class runner when marathon running, unlike today, was unfashionable. He trained harder than most — often 100 miles a week — and believed in the work ethic with his thousands of miles run in plimsoles. My first memories of him were from newspaper pictures showing him collapsing when in sight of the finish."

Bedford, the former 10,000 metres world record-holder, whose own training in the 1970s was applauded by Peters, said: "Few athletes push themselves to such exhaustion as Jim did at those Games."

Peters had been a "worthy" member of the 19-strong London Marathon Club, which is restricted to those British competitors who have won medals at leading championships or set world bests. He was a pioneer of long-distance running in the 1950s. After finishing ninth in the 1948 Olympic 10,000 metres, he concentrated on the marathon and in 1954, shortly before Vancouver, won the Polytechnic marathon in a world best 2hr 17min 39.4sec.

Peters retired from athletics after Vancouver. "I could never forget what I suffered in the sun — it cost me my killer instinct," he said.

Obituaries, page 21

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD

No 1613

ACROSS
1 *Canterbury Tales* poet (7)
5 Well off (4)
9 Doctor's deputy (5)
10 Skull (7)
11 Fashionable idler, eg Wooster (3-5-4)
12 Coy, chaste (6)
13 One as Barbados, Tasmania (6)
16 One batted across table (4-4,4)
19 Compress (7)
20 Reversed; loosened (5)
21 President of the Immortals sported with her (*Hardy*) (4)
22 Diana temple city (7)

DOWN
1 Sect: fashionable (eg TV series) (4)
2 Hail with enthusiasm (7)
3 Fall, fail badly (4,1,7)
4 Count up: consider (6)
6 — Jones, architect (5)
7 Primate related to Man (7)
8 Crazy (but likeable) (4,2,1,5)
12 Put (into eg bank) (7)
14 Makes reference (to) (7)
15 Nasal outburst (6)
17 Substantives (5)
18 Those offered in betting (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1612
ACROSS: 1 Proust 4 Sprout 8 Cosy 9 Analysis 10 First Lady 13 Ashen 15 Union 16 Futon 18 Cassandra 21 Skeleton 22 Chop 23 Oblong 24 Stupor
DOWN: 1 Pacify 2 Obstruct 3 Trawl 5 Pollyanna 6 Oust 7 Tuscan 11 Truncheon 12 Amiss 14 Hardship 16 Fiasco 17 Tamper 19 Sinus 20 Fell

Wright faces six weeks on the sidelines with knee injury

By Matt Dickinson

IAN WRIGHT may be forced to cancel his chat show this week because of a serious knee injury, but the nation is expected to cope. Whether West Ham United will survive his absence for what could be a protracted period is another matter entirely.

The immediate concern, after Wright collapsed suddenly in training yesterday, is their treacherous FA Cup third-round replay away to Swansea City tonight. Short of players and morale, they will face the team from the Nationwide League third division with mounting trepidation.

There are also more significant worries in the longer term, not just at club level. With Wright likely to be absent for at least six weeks after he underwent surgery last night, Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, will also be concerned as he plans for a match against France, the world champions, and subsequent European championship qualifiers.

Wright saw a specialist yesterday and an exploratory operation is believed to have shown that his cartilage required surgery, ruling him out until March. However, there are also fears that ligaments have been damaged, which would mean a longer spell of recuperation.

Wright was injured in the early stages of the 1-1 draw with Swansea at Upton Park and Harry Redknapp, his manager, said last night: "The knee has been locking up on him ever since. He thought he would be OK and tried to give it a go in training, but it locked again. It is a terrible blow to lose someone of his quality."



Wright: operation

The 35-year-old will be hoping that he will be fit enough to sit on the studio couch on Thursday night, when this week's *Friday Night's All Wright* is due to be filmed. A spokeswoman for London Weekend Television said it was awaiting medical reports.

Wright, who missed West Ham's 4-1 defeat at Manchester United on Sunday, joins a lengthening injury list at Upton Park with Marc Keller, Paul Kitson and Javier Margas already ruled out of the replay. The club has also been plagued by poor form recently, with John Hartson appearing to be listless and the subject of transfer speculation.

Redknapp is tied by a lack of funds, but he is hoping to secure Scott Minto, the left back, from Benfica in a deal worth up to £1 million this week.

The squad is so thin that Joe Cole, the much-heralded teenage midfield player, will be in the squad to face Swansea and is likely to be pressed into regular action sooner than Redknapp had hoped. "The injury situation has probably pushed it on us a bit, but it's not a problem," Redknapp said.

West Ham suffered their fourth successive away defeat in the league at Old Trafford and Redknapp knows that his club's chances of qualifying for Europe via a favourable FA Carling Premiership place are receding. The FA Cup remains their best hope, but they face a tricky test tonight.

Another upset is possible at Craven Cottage, where Fulham have already beaten Southampton in the second round of the Worthington Cup this season. "It'll be a hard game," David Jones, the Southampton manager, said, "but we'll be going at it with all guns blazing."

Southampton moved up to eighteenth place in the FA Carling Premiership with a 3-1 victory against Charlton Athletic at The Dell and Jones said: "Hopefully, we could be turning the corner at last."

FA to buy Wembley, page 27
Feuer's lead role, page 41

London Scottish merger put on ice

By David Hands, Rugby Correspondent

THE marriage proposed between Bristol and London Scottish was halted yesterday some steps short of the altar. After a day of discussion involving Nick de Scossa, the Bristol chief executive, and Tony Tiarks, chairman of London Scottish, together with leading figures from English First-Division Rugby, both clubs announced that their scheduled fixtures on Saturday would take place while the implications of the proposals were examined further.

That will give supporters of London Scottish, whose absence from Allied Dunbar Premiership matches has been instrumental in persuading Tiarks to look elsewhere, to demonstrate on behalf of their club at Welford Road, where the exiles play Leicester. Elaine Watterson, the president of the supporters' association, has been inundated with messages from members dismayed at the prospect of their club's name disappearing from the top tier of the game.

Tiarks acknowledged that Bristol, the leaders of the second division and who play Wakefield on Saturday, had made an offer (believed to be worth £1 million) for a 100 per cent shareholding in London Scottish Rugby Club Ltd as a way of ensuring a place among the elite, which its officials believe could be denied them by the machinations of first division owners intent on an exclusive Anglo-Welsh league next season. Indeed, the English second division clubs, meeting in Birmingham yesterday, voted against the formation of either an Anglo-Welsh or a British league, seeking instead to preserve the integrity of the Premiership.

The Scottish Rugby Union (SRU) indicated that there would be no cash support for London Scottish from north of the border, even while they acknowledged the exiles' outstanding contribution to international rugby. "We have a strategy in place … part of which is designed to encourage players to come back and play their rugby in Scotland," Bill Watson, the SRU chief executive, said.